The International History of the Yemen Civil War, 1962-1968

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Asher Aviad Orkaby

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Dissertation Advisor: Roger Owen Author: Asher Aviad Orkaby

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Abstract

The deposition of Imam Muhammad al-Badr in September 1962 was the culmination of a Yemeni nationalist movement that began in the 1940s with numerous failed attempts to overthrow the traditional religious legal order. Prior to 1962, both the USSR and Egypt had been cultivating alliances with al-Badr in an effort to secure their strategic interests in South Arabia. In the days following the 1962 coup d'état, Abdullah Sallal and his cohort of Yemeni officers established a republic and concealed the fate of al-Badr who had survived an assault on his Sana'a palace and whose supporters had already begun organizing a tribal coalition against the republic. A desperate appeal by Yemeni republicans brought the first Egyptian troops to Yemen. Saudi Arabia, pressured by Egyptian troops, border tribal considerations and earlier treaties with the Yemeni Imamate, supported the Imam's royalist opposition. The battleground between Egyptian president Gamal Abdel Nasser and al-Badr was transformed into an arena for international conflict and diplomacy. The UN mission to Yemen, while portrayed as a symbol of failed and underfunded global peacekeeping at the time, was in fact instrumental in establishing the basis for a diplomatic resolution to the conflict. Bruce Condé, an American philatelist, brought global attention to the royalist-republican struggle to control the Yemeni postal system. The last remnants of the British Middle East Empire fought with Nasser to maintain a mutually declining level of influence in the region. Israeli intelligence and air force aided royalist forces and served witness to the Egyptian use of chemical weapons, a factor that would impact decision-making prior to the 1967 War. Despite concurrent Cold War tensions, Americans and Soviets

appeared on the same side of the Yemeni conflict and acted mutually to confine Nasser to the borders of South Arabia. This internationalized conflict was a pivotal event in Middle East history as it oversaw the formation of a modern Yemeni state, the fall of Egyptian and British regional influence, another Arab-Israeli war, Saudi dominance of the Arabian Peninsula, and shifting power alliances in the Middle East.

Acknowledgements

I consider myself fortunate to have received the wisdom and guidance from three pillars of the academic community throughout the course of preparing this dissertation. Professor Roger Owen instilled upon me the wisdom of decades of experience in the field of Middle East History. Professor Erez Manela meticulously and thoughtfully read through many drafts, helping me look beyond the empirical analysis to the much broader world of international history. Professor Steven Caton served as a constant reminder that as international as this story became, it was at its core about Yemen.

The Center for Middle Eastern Studies at Harvard and my mentor Susan Kahn helped me grease the wheels of university complexities, ensuring that I was always funded and on track to finishing my dissertation on time. Both Clive Jones and Jesse Ferris have worked on aspects of the Yemen civil war and offered invaluable help at each stage of international research and writing. My colleagues from the Government Department, over three years as a Weatherhead Center Fellow in the Program for Global Society and Security, helped me think about my topic from an international relations perspective.

The number of archivists and academics who have helped me along the way in Britain, Canada, Israel, Russia, the US and Yemen are too numerous to list individually, hardly a justice for those who have given me a great deal of personal attention themselves. This globetrotting research could not have been accomplished without the generosity of the Society for the Historians of American Foreign Relations (SHAFR), the Bradley Foundation, the Harvard Davis Center, the Institute of Historical Research, the Harvard Weatherhead Center for International Affairs Canada Program, and the LBJ Presidential Library.

All the research funds and advisers in the world would not have allowed me to finish this dissertation without my sons', Binyamin, Eitan, and Naftali, nightly reminders that there are more important things to life than a dissertation. But mostly, without my loving wife Ariela, who probably knows more about the 1960s in Yemen by this point, I would have lost my sanity long ago in some dimly-lit archive halfway across the world.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction

"There were three different stages to the Yemeni Civil War. For the first few months, it was genuinely a war between Abdullah al-Sallal and his republican regime and Imam al-Badr and his royalist tribal supporters. Within half a year of Nasser's arrival, the Yemeni republicans faded into the background and the Egyptians continued the war against the royalists. By 1965, however, the Egyptians were left with only themselves to fight."

- Recounted, while chewing a mouthful of qat, by General Abdullah Al Sana'ani, a former Yemeni General and current curator of the Yemen Military Museum in Sana'a, May 2013.

General Abdullah al-Sana'ani's observations reflect the dominant Yemeni opinion of a revolution that began on September 26, 1962. The 1962 revolution was the last in a series of attempts to overthrow the Yemeni Imamate, which had begun with the assassination of Muhammad al-Badr's grandfather, Yahya in 1948. Historically, when a small military contingent or political rival overthrew the Imam, he would escape to the northern highlands of Yemen and gather tribal allies. The tribes were promised a free hand in plundering the capital city as payment for their military service in aiding the Imam's return to power. This somewhat simplified scenario had held true for hundreds of years in Yemen and continued during the revolts in 1948 and 1955. Why, then, did the Imam's counterrevolutionary historical scenario fail in 1962? How and why did this Yemeni revolution differ from prior episodes in Yemen's history? What impact did this have on the future of the Yemeni state and the Middle East in general?

In the days following the shelling of Imam al-Badr's palace and the outbreak of hostilities, Abdullah Sallal and his republican followers managed to convince Egyptian president Gamal Abdel Nasser to support the Yemen Arab Republic (YAR). At the same time, Yemeni Prince Hassan, al-Badr's uncle, assumed the role of Imam in al-Badr's absence and secured aid commitments to the royalist opposition from Saudi

Arabia. The involvement of Egypt and Saudi Arabia in the Yemeni conflict was both a manifestation of earlier strategic agreements with Yemen and a consequence of political intrigue surrounding the falsely reported death of al-Badr. Over the course of the next six years, Britain, Canada, Israel, the UN, US, and USSR would join Egypt and Saudi Arabia to assume varying roles in fighting, mediating, and supplying the belligerent forces. The first few days of the conflict transformed a local regime change into a global struggle that would impact both the Yemen civil war and multiple international rivalries.

The Global and Arab Cold Wars – New International History

A collective analysis of the American, British, Egyptian, Israeli, Saudi, and Soviet interventions and how their individual foreign policies interacted and contrasted with one another, provides a better understanding of the Yemen civil war and the impact that the international arena in Yemen had upon events and relations beyond its borders. In particular, American and Soviet positions in Yemen during the 1960s reveal several anomalies to generalized themes of the "Global Cold War", as defined by Odd Arne Westad.[1] He argues that American and Soviet ideologies were a major components of their respective Cold War policies in the Third World. There are, however, considerable difficulties with applying this Cold War paradigm of ideology to the Middle East in the manner it has been applied in other parts of Asia and Africa.

The Middle East was and continues to be dominated by intraregional conflicts and circumstances, such as Israel/Palestine and the impact of oil export dependency on many Arab countries, making US and USSR ideological foreign policies difficult to maintain. During the 1960s, Soviet and American policy in Yemen was based on

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[1]Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007). This reinterpretation of Westad's argument is based on a personal conversation with the author.

realpolitik strategic calculations, rather than ideologically-based decisions. The Soviet construction of the western Yemeni port of Hodeidah, was part of a broader Soviet effort to secure international shipping, particularly along the Red Sea and the entryway to the Suez Canal. US grand strategy envisioned a closer relationship with the Saudi oil monarchy north of the Yemen border, thereby placing a premium on Arabian political stability and the containment of regional conflicts. The converging foreign policies of the US and USSR was manifested by mutual support and recognition of the YAR. Furthermore, by 1965, both powers tolerated and even encouraged Nasser's continued occupation of Yemen in an effort to divert maintain their individual strategic interests in Yemen and subsequently divert Egyptian attention away from Israel. After 1967 and through the 1980s, however, South Arabia became a partial exception to ideology-less Cold War interactions in the Middle East with the founding of the first and only communist Arab state in South Yemen.

In coining the term "Arab Cold War", Malcolm Kerr characterized the 1950s and 1960s as a conflict between monarchies and nationalists in the Middle East.[2] There are several difficulties in applying Kerr's theory to Yemen during the 1960s. The boundaries between nationalist and monarchist were not rigid as is evident from Nasser's alliance with Yemeni Imam al-Badr (and his father Ahmad) prior to the war and the Jordanian monarchy's recognition of the YAR in 1964. In addition, the conflict in Yemen did not occur in a regional vacuum. Egyptian rivalries with Britain, the Iranian Shah, Iraq, and Israel along with competing US-USSR visions for the Arabian Peninsula overshadowed Nasser's "cold war" rivalry with Saudi monarchs. The Yemen civil war demonstrates that the 1960s was a period of conflict between nation-

[2] Malcolm Kerr, *The Arab Cold War: Gamal 'Abd Al-Nasir and his Rivals* – 1958-1970 (London: Oxford University Press, 1971). Contemporary references to the Yemen civil war (Ferris, Jesse *Nasser's Gamble* for example) continue to cite Kerr's "Arab Cold War" as the definitive characterization of the period.

state formation and an abstract idea of Arab unity, rather than a black and white ideological conflict between Egypt and Saudi Arabia.[3]

This study of the Yemen civil war is an example of new international history that seeks to combine multinational archival sources in a broader explanation of events on the ground and of a local conflict's far reaching impact. Matthew Connelly established the model for this type of history in his analysis of the Algerian war for independence, 1954-62. Connelly explains how France won the battle on the ground but lost the war internationally.[4]

This dissertation analyzes the Yemen conflict using a similar framework. The Yemen civil war was characterized by two complementary battlefields: the highlands of Yemen and the floors of international diplomacy and media. The mechanized Egyptian occupation army faced the challenge of fighting an elusive tribal militia that successfully used cave hideouts and civilian cover as part of its battle strategy. The international war fought in the halls of Moscow, Washington, and the UN, differed from that fought by the French in Algeria, in that there was no clear consensus that Egypt was an imperialist power, particularly in contrast to Britain with its colony in Aden. Furthermore, Egypt lost both the battle on the ground and the war in international media and support. After a series of failed diplomatic efforts, the international community resigned itself to tolerate and even encouraged Nasser's continued investment in a war that was limiting Egypt economically and politically elsewhere in the region.

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[3] Avraham Sela, "Nasser's Regional Politics," in *Rethinking Nasserism: Revolution and Historical Memory in Modern Egypt*, ed. Elie Podeh and Onn Winkler (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2004), 200. Sela made similar observations about the limitations of Kerr's ideological Arab Cold War. He refers to the 1960s as a transition from political symbols to "negotiated order".

[4] Matthew Connelly, *A Diplomatic Revolution: Algeria's Fight for Independence and the Origins of the Post-Cold War Era* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

Connelly urged scholars of diplomatic history to "take off the Cold War lens," of East-West rivalry, as this paradigm obfuscates themes of postcolonial development, economic integration, and demographics.[5] Taking off both the "Cold War lens" and the "Arab Cold War lens" reveals multiple interactions, conflicts, and themes that would have otherwise been obscured by the dominant paradigm. This narrative of the international Yemen civil war focuses on traditional overarching themes of US-USSR and Egypt-Saudi Arabia competition, while reinterpreting their applicability to the Yemen case and adding layers of narrative and analysis beyond the central conflicts. Topics of modernity and nationalism in South Arabia, Canadian policy in the Middle East, regional peacekeeping funding crises, the Anglo-Egyptian rivalry, philatelic significance, and Israeli-Egyptian confrontations beyond the Sinai border dominate the pages of this study. As Erez Manela explains, rather than removing the Cold War lens entirely, perhaps what is needed is a bi-focal lens that allows for a "broader field of vision" to incorporate both traditional and innovative perspectives.[6] Through this broader analysis of the Yemen civil war, it is possible to reconsider the centrality of Saudi-Egyptian and US-Soviet Cold Wars. A narrative of monumental conflict between two powers can obscure historical episodes, such as the Yemen civil war, where opposing powers arrived at moments of agreement and cooperation.

International Intervention in Civil Wars

The Yemen civil war of 1962-68, was a prototypical example of civil conflicts during the post-WWII era. From 1945-1999, there were 127 civil wars world-wide, compared with 25 interstate wars during the same period. Fearon and Laitin attribute

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[5] Matthew Connelly, "Taking Off the Cold War Lens: Visions of North-South Conflict during the Algerian War for Independence," *The American Historical Review* 105 (2000): 739-769.

[6] Erez Manela, "A Pox on Your Narrative: Writing Disease Control into Cold War History," *Diplomatic History* 34:2 (2010): 299-323.

the prevalence of civil wars during this period to "small, lightly armed bands practicing guerilla warfare from rural base areas." The four most important conditions for such an insurgency include weak government, rough terrain, large impoverished population, and access to weapons and foreign support.[7] Prior to 1962, the Yemeni tribal population was poor, yet well-armed, and resided in a mountainous terrain that had frustrated the efforts of invading armies for centuries. Multiple attempts to overthrow the al-Badr's Hamid al-Din ruling family were a sign of both the increasing strength of the opposition and the weakness of the Imamate.

Foreign intervention in post-WWII civil wars can be divided into three main categories: military, economic, and diplomatic. The consensus among international relations scholars is that foreign military and economic intervention tend to prolong both the duration and intensity of the conflict while making a resolution more difficult to attain.[8] The Egyptian military presence and extensive aid to the YAR singlehandedly sustained the longevity of the republican regime and perpetuated the conflict against al-Badr and the northern royalist tribes. The royalist armies, on the other hand, were supplied through an extensive clandestine operation involving British mercenaries, Israeli airlifts, CIA infiltrations, Saudi funding and Iranian advisers. The Yemen civil war marked one of the few times that England, Iran, Israel, and Saudi Arabia were on

[7] James D. Fearon and David D. Laitin, "Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War," *American Political Science Review* 97, 1 (February 2003): 75-90. Fearon and Laitin were one of the first to conduct a rigorous cross-national analysis of why civil wars occur.

[8] Dylan Balch-Lindsay and Andrew J. Enterline, "Killing time: The world politics of civil war duration, 1820-1992," *International Studies Quarterly* 44 (2010): 615-42. Ibrahim Elbadawi and Nicholas Sambanis, "External interventions and the duration of civil wars," (paper presented at workshop on Economics of Civil Science, Princeton, NJ, March 18-19, 2000). Patrick Regan, "Third Party interventions and the duration of intrastate conflicts," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 46 (2002): 55-73.

the same side of a conflict.[9] To support the republicans, Soviet economic aid from 1962-1967 and direct military intervention during the siege of Sana'a in 1968 acted similarly to maintain a republic that would have otherwise succumbed to financial crises and a subsequently military defeat.

During this same period from 1945-1999, there were more than 400 diplomatic efforts worldwide by third parties to mediate hostilities. Foreign intermediaries acted to bridge the gap between two intransigent parties who could not otherwise reconcile differences and approach the negotiating table.[10] Diplomatic mediation during civil conflicts had a relative success rate of 30%, which reflect the fact that foreign nations or institutions did not have the ability to provide sanctuary or security if agreements broke down leaving one side or the other in a position of increased vulnerability.[11] Other studies have shown that mediation shortened the length of a given conflict even as the fighting continued during and after the peace conference.[12] The success of diplomatic mediation has been shown to differ depending on the stage in the conflict in which it was implemented. Mediation efforts in the middle of a conflict were more effective than those taking place at the onset of a conflict or after an extended period of fighting.[13]

The timing of diplomatic efforts in Yemen can account for their initial failure. Within weeks of the onset of hostilities, UN and US representatives began a period of

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[9] Saeed M. Badeeb, *Saudi-Iranian Relations, 1932-1982* (London: Centre for Arab and Iranian Studies, 1993), 56. The 1960s was a period of Iranian-Saudi alliance and cooperation.

[10] Patrick M. Regan and Aysegul Aydin, "Diplomacy and Other Forms of Intervention in Civil Wars," *The Journal of Conflicts Resolution* 50 (October 2006): 739.

[11] William J. Dixon, "Third-party techniques for preventing conflict escalation and promoting peaceful settlement," *International Organization* 50 (1996): 653-681.

[12] Patrick M. Regan and Daniel Noron, "Greed, grievance, and mobilization in civil wars," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 49 (2005): 319-336.

[13] Regan and Aydin, "Diplomacy and Other Forms".

“shuttle diplomacy” between Cairo and Riyadh in an attempt to secure the withdrawal of Egyptian and Saudi support for warring Yemeni factions. These efforts culminated with a 14-month UN mission to Yemen led by Canadian peacekeepers from July 1963 to September 1964. The inability of these efforts to produce a lasting diplomatic solution to the conflict may have been a product of poor timing, rather than misguided terms of agreement. The performance of the UN mission to Yemen, previously misinterpreted as a failure, was hampered not only by poor timing but also by pre-1962 tensions related to the financing of peacekeeping missions. From 1965-1967, Saudi Arabia and Egypt organized their own peace conference overseen by Arab mediators, culminating with the Khartoum Conference in August 1967. At the basis of these agreements were the original terms of withdrawal proposed by the UN and US mediation efforts, but not enacted during the period of their intervention, evidence that their weakness was not in the content of the proposal, but in the timing of the peace negotiations.

Mediation efforts during the Yemen civil war were hindered as well by the multiple non-state and clandestine actors involved in the conflict. British and French mercenaries acted to train and coordinate royalist fighting against Egyptian troops, while Israeli pilots and intelligence agents supplied royalist soldiers with vital weaponry and communications equipment. Bruce Condé, an American philatelist, singlehandedly founded the royalist postal system as part of a broader royalist-republican struggle for national legitimacy and international recognition. Yemen had become the playground of the international diplomatic and intelligence community.

The Civil War and the Emergence of a Modern State

Yemen, located in the southwest corner of the Arabian Peninsula, did not exist as a distinct South Arabian state prior to the 20th Century.[14] Harold Ingrams, a British diplomat who served in the Aden Protectorate argued that "the *normal* state of al-Yemen through history has been chaos. The people and their country have been a regional entity in the Arab world, but never a unified nation."[15]

Since Roman times, when Yemen was referred to as *Arabia Felix*, the region has been invaded, occupied, and subjugated by no fewer than a dozen external powers. Dating back to 9th Century, the Qasimi succession of Yemeni Imams, or religious leaders adherent to the Zaydi branch of Shi'a Islam, was the only constant among the changing rulers. In the 19th Century the Egyptian army, under Muhammad Ali captured the northern half of Yemen at the behest of the Ottoman Empire while the British Empire captured the southern port of Aden. Over the following decades the British and Ottoman Empire expanded control and influence over the surrounding tribal areas. To avoid territorial conflict, they signed a treaty officially dividing South Arabia into North and South Yemen. The great majority of North Yemen was of the Zaydi religious sect, increasing the power and influence of the Yemeni Zaydi Imam. Rule over South Yemen, dominated by the Shafi'i branch of Sunni Islam, was consolidated by the British in the 20th Century in the form of the East and West Aden Protectorate which eventually became the Federation of South Arabia.

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[14] Robert W. Stookey, *Yemen: The Politics of the Yemen Arab* Republic (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1978), 2.

Robin Bidwell, *The Two Yemens* (Boulder: CO: Westview Press, 1983). Bidwell argues that the concept of the unified state of Yemen dates back to 1229 CE, the Yemeni region entered two centuries of a golden age under the Rasulid Dynasty which ruled over most of South Arabia.

[15] Harold Ingrams, *The Yemen: Imams, Rulers, & Revolutions* (London: John Murray, 1963), 4.

In 1918, Imam Yahya Muhammad of the Hamid al-Din family, a member of the Qasimi religious dynasty, led a war of independence against the Ottomans, founding the Mutawakkilite Kingdom in North Yemen. The traditional view of Yahya and his son Ahmad, who succeeded him in 1948, was that of autocratic rulers who forcibly isolated their country from foreign influence.[16] The increased centralization of authority under Imam Ahmad pushed certain groups into exile where they developed political aspirations that would ultimately lead to the deposition of a theocratic monarchy and its replacement by a secular republic.[17] Historian J.E. Peterson explains that the modern Yemeni revolution began during Imam Yahya's reign (1918-1948), culminating with the 1962 civil war, following decades of gradual revolution and pressures for change in Yemen.[18]

An additional framework with which this study engages is the impact that the internationalization of the conflict had upon the Yemen sense of national identity and state formation. The presence of the "other" in North Yemen, the extent of the foreign presence, and the competing state models forced simultaneously upon North Yemen, compelled a collective exercise in defining Yemeni national identity. September 1962 was not only the deposition of Imam al-Badr, the last member of the Qasidi dynasty, but also the formulation of a modern sense of the Yemeni state.

The opposition movement that began gradually in 1918 was accelerated as resources and a significant foreign presence intervened in Yemeni affairs. International intervention helped further the establishment of a modern political bureaucracy, a

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[16] Ingrams, *The Yemen*, 63. Ingrams says of Yahya: "No ruler of importance could have so personified isolation."

[17] Stookey, *Yemen*, 6. For example, after Egyptian King Faruq was deposed, Ahmad ordered the confiscation of all radio sets in Yemen.

[18] J. E., Peterson, *Yemen: The Search for a Modern State*, (London: Croom Helm, 1982), 68.

national army, and an increase in revenue with the expansion of existing taxation and the postal networks. Both Egypt and Saudi Arabia disbursed large sums of money to Yemeni tribes in an effort to win their support during the conflict, giving tribesmen access to money for modern imports and luxuries.[19] Foreign construction projects gave the country a road network connecting major urban areas, utilities in Hodeidah, Sana'a and Ta'iz, a modern port in Hodeidah, an airport in Sana'a, and an improved communications network. The internationalized civil war brought about the demise of the Yemeni Imamate, Nasser's Arab Nationalism, and British Imperialism in South Arabia, three of the competing forces working to undermine modern Yemeni state formation.[20]

Nasser envisioned a Yemeni state that would be controlled from Cairo and would mirror the United Arab Republic in many aspects from its constitution to the format of its postal stamps. The founding Yemeni republicans were emulators of Nasserism, supporters of Arab nationalist unity, and consciously invited Egyptian intervention to secure the republic. The Egyptian occupation went to great lengths to stifle opposition including the Imam's supporters, dissident tribal alliances, and internal republican opposition through warfare, bribery, assassination, and detainment.

The US, Israeli, British and Iranian foreign policies exhibited a preference for continued instability in Yemen, as Nasser's military entanglement benefited their mutual interests away from South Arabia. The US supported and sanctioned Nasser's continued presence, while Israel, the UK, and Iran collectively undermined the

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[19] Mohammed A. Zabarah, "The Yemeni Revolution of 1962 Seen as a Social Revolution," in *Contemporary Yemen: Politics and Historical Background*, ed. B.R. Pridham (London: Croom Helm, 1984), 80.

[20] Fred Halliday, *Arabia Without Sultans* (London: Saqi Books, 2002), 27. Halliday argues that Soviet foreign intervention in South Arabia presented a fourth obstacle to the Yemeni state following the end of the civil war in 1968.

Egyptian position through an extensive clandestine war. The Saudis preferred a weak ruled either by the Imam or another political entity that could be dominated by Saudi Arabia. Instability was tolerated as long as hostilities did not carry over into Saudi territory.

Soviet state visions for Yemen were focused on grooming a pro-Soviet leader who would be amendable to accommodating a naval and military base in South Arabia. After Moscow's initial alliance with Imam al-Badr was derailed in September 1962, contingent plans were put in place to appeal directly to the Yemeni people and cultivate a relationship with five prominent pro-Soviet figures in the Yemen republic. The USSR continued its support even after the Egyptian withdrawal and managed to sustain the Yemeni republic and its new president 'Abd al-Rahman al-Iryani who was one of the "Soviet-Five".

The civil war cost the lives of over 200,000 Yemenis and caused incalculable damage to property. The collective goal of the war's international participants was not, however, to destroy North Yemen or decimate its population. Rather, the former kingdom was viewed as a potential state, whether unstable, weak, Nasserist, or communist. The investment, capital, and international attention during the 1960s brought not only destruction and war but a sense of nationalism and unity for the emerging modern state of Yemen.

Bibliographical Notes

The goal of this international history of the Yemen civil war is to draw from the multiple historical perspectives in constructing a single comprehensive analysis of this landmark conflict. By drawing on archives from Britain, Canada, Israel, Russian, the UN, the US, and Yemen along with the secondary literature from each of these national perspectives, this work explains how and why the Yemen civil war became an arena for global conflict and what were the implication of international participation in the conflict.

When *New York Times* correspondent Dana Adams Schmidt published his book on the Yemen civil war in 1968, he was justified in referring to the conflict as *The Unknown War*.[21] Relatively little media attention had been given to this remote region of Arabia. Around the time of Schmidt's book, three additional media accounts were published by British, Israeli, and French journalists, collectively providing a thorough chronological description of the war.[22] Since the publication of these four journalistic accounts, many works have focused on various aspects of the conflict such as Saudi-Egyptian rivalry[23] or the history of Saudi-Yemeni relations.[24]

Firsthand accounts and analyses of the last years of British occupation in Aden represent the largest single body of literature on Yemen during the 1960s. There are

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[21] Dana Adams Schmidt, *Yemen: The Unknown War* (London: Bodley Head, 1968).

[22] Edgar O'Ballance, *The War in Yemen* (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1971); Claude Deffarge and Gordian Troeller, *Yemen 62-69, de la révolution sauvage à la trêve des guerriers* (Paris, R. Laffont, 1969); Yael Vered, *Hafikhah u-milḥamah be-Teman* (*Coup and War in Yemen*) (Tel Aviv : Am 'oved, 1967), Vered is the only of the authors that did not travel to Yemen at any point, but rather compiled the book from her diligent review of Arab press reports while at her diplomatic post in Paris.

[23] Saeed M. Badeeb, *The Saudi-Egyptian conflict over North Yemen, 1962-1970* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1986).

[24] F. Gregory Gause, *Saudi-Yemeni Relations: Domestic Structures and Foreign Influence* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990).

dozens of memoirs written by former British diplomats, Special Air Services (SAS) members, and colonial officials in Aden[25] and an equal number of historical studies.[26] Two recent books by Clive Jones and Duff Hart-Davis have focused on the British covert war in Yemen.[27] The collection of books and articles on the end of the British Empire are singularly focused on internal British politics, border wars with Yemeni tribes, and nationalist terrorism in Aden and do not, for the most part, contextualize British policies within an international framework.

Significantly less attention has been devoted to original research on American policy towards the Yemen war, with only a few articles devoted to Kennedy and Johnson's policy towards the conflict.[28] The Yemen civil war appears as a footnote or at most a small section in studies of Arab-Israel conflict and relations with Nasser. Multiple works in English provide a history of Yemen, covering the civil war from a domestic perspective as a chapter within the larger work.[29]

Literature in Arabic and Russian on the Yemen civil war is extensive, but lacking in sources and academic analysis. Several Russian books focus on the Yemen Arab

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[25] These accounts include the memoirs of High Commissioners of Aden (for example Charles Johnston, *The View from Steamers Point: Being an Account of Three Years in Aden* (London: Collins, 1964)) and British politicians (such as David Smiley, *Arabian Assignment* (London: Cooper, 1975). See bibliography for a more comprehensive list.

[26] The best historical account is Spencer Mawby, *British policy in Aden and the protectorates, 1955-67: last outpost of a Middle East empire* (London: Routledge, 2005).

[27] Clive Jones, *Britain and the Yemen Civil War, 1962-1965: Ministers, Mercenaries, and Mandarins: Foreign Policy and the Limits of Covert Action*(Brighton, UK: Sussex Academic Press, 2004) and Duff Hart-Davis, *The War that Never Was: The True Story of the Men Who Fought Britain's Most Secret Battle* (London: Arrow, 2012). Hart-Davis' war was so "secret" that he did not even cite Jones' work on the same subject written seven years earlier, claiming to be telling this story "for the very first time".

[28] For example Michael B. Bishku, "The Kennedy Administration, the UN, and the Yemen Civil War," *Middle East Policy* 1:4 (1992), 116-28.

[29] Paul Dresch, *A History of Modern Yemen* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) and John E. Peterson, *Yemen: The Search for a Modern State* (London: Croom Helm, 1982) are two examples.

Republic, the September 1962 Revolution, and Soviet involvement in South Arabia.[30] Recently declassified documents compiled on Soviet-Egyptian relations from 1957-1967, entitled *The Near East Conflict*, focus mostly on the Arab-Israel conflict, while devoting some attention to Yemen.[31]

The great majority of Arab writing on the civil war was published in Yemen. Dozens of eyewitness and historical accounts provide an interesting local perspective, albeit with few, if any, verifiable sources. Mohsin al-Ayni and ‘Abd al-Rahman al-Baydani, two former YAR Prime Ministers, published the most organized and well-known recollections of the first decades of the YAR. As is the case with political memoirs more generally, the recollections of al-Ayni and al-Baydani are intended to unabashedly whitewash their involvement in the civil war and for the most part cannot be taken at face value.[32] Yemeni historical accounts of September 1962 portray the years of the civil war as an idealistic struggle for Yemeni nationalism. For example, from 2003-2010, the Yemeni Department of Moral Guidance based in Sana’a released a seven-volume series following a national conference to commemorate the 40 year anniversary of the revolution. The volumes included selected essays, speeches, and original documents. The historic analysis amounts to little more than propaganda for Yemeni nationalism and the idealized life of Yemeni revolutionaries, and the most

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[30] Lev Nikolaevich Kotlov, *Ĭemenskai͡a Arabskai͡a Respublika* (Moscow: Nauka, 1971) and O. G. Gerasimov, *Ĭemenskai͡a revoli͡ut͡sii͡a, 1962-1975* (Moscow: Nauka, 1979) are two examples.

[31] *Blizhnevostochnyĭ konflikt : iz dokumentov arkhiva vneshneĭ politiki Rossiĭskoĭ Federat͡sii* (Moscow: Mezhdunarodnyĭ fond "Demokratii͡a", 2003).

[32] Mohsin A. Alaini, *50 Years in Shifting Sands: Personal Experience in the Building of a Modern State in Yemen* (Beirut, Lebanon: Dar An-Nahar, 2004) and Baydani, ‘Abd al-Rahman, *Azmat al-ummah al-‘Arabīyah wa-thawrat al-Yaman* (Cairo: Jumhūrīyat Miṣr al-‘Arabīyah, 1984).

substantial archival sources are translations of documents from the British National Archives.[33]

A significant number of Egyptian war veterans have written historic recollections and assessment of the Egyptian occupation of Yemen. The most well-known among these books, written by Egypt's former chief of intelligence Salah al-Din al-Hadidi and Mahmud 'Adil Ahmad,[34] is used extensively in this work to elucidate elements of Egyptian politics and decision-making. The two best overviews and incorporations of these Egyptian memoirs was compiled by Jesse Ferris, in his work on Nasser's intervention in Yemen and its impact upon the Egyptian political class[35] and by Laura James in her book on Nasser's foreign policy.[36] While extensive, Egyptian literature does not venture beyond the immediate confines of military barracks and the political world of Cairo.

This dissertation goes beyond the current accounts of the Yemen civil war, often still referred to as the "Unknown War," in the both scope of its historical time period and the extent of its archival resources. Through an extensive narrative of international participation in this conflict, it is the intention that Yemen during the 1960s will no longer remain an obscure and "Unknown" conflict. Rather, it will be seen as a significant moment in history with ramification for the Middle East and the broader international community.

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[33] *Thawrat 26 Sebtember 1962* (Sana'a: Department of Moral Guidance, 2004). This series was so popular that it was already released in a second and third printing.

[34] Sallah al-Din Al-Hadidi, *Shāhid 'alá ḥarb al-Yaman* (Cairo: Maktabat Madbūlī, 1984) and Mahmud 'Adil Ahmad, *Dhikrayat Harb al-Yaman, 1962-1967*(Cairo: Maṭba'at al-Ukhuwwah, 1992).

[35] Jesse Ferris, *Nasser's Gamble: How Intervention in Yemen Caused the Six-Day War and the Decline of Egyptian Power* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013).

[36] Laura M. James, *Nasser at War: Arab Images of the Enemy* (New York: Palgrave, Macmillan, 2006).

Chapter Outline

The subsequent seven chapters will follow a chronological narrative starting in 1839 and end in the aftermath of the Yemeni Civil War in 1968. The purpose of this dissertation is not to reiterate a journalistic account of every battle in the Yemen civil war, nor is it an attempt to summarize events in Aden that led to the withdrawal of British forces in 1967. Rather, the chapters will focus on the myriad countries involved, the significance of the war for their own foreign policies, and the impact of the internationalized conflict on Yemen and the Middle East.

Chapter 1, "The First Anglo-Egyptian Confrontations," begins with the capture of Aden in 1839 as part of Lord Palmerston's campaign against Muhammad Ali, and continues through the 20th Century, culminating with the 1956 Suez War. This chapter explains the historic Anglo-Egyptian rivalry that came to dominate events in Yemen during the 1960s.

Chapter 2, "International Intrigue and the Origins of September 1962," argues that the coup in September 1962 was a culmination of more than two decades of revolutionary sentiments among Yemeni émigrés and local opposition movements, rather than a revolution emanating primarily from the Egyptian foreign office. The chapter then focuses on Imam Muhammad al-Badr and his relationship with Nasser and the USSR prior to September 1962 and concludes with a contrast to the US and the relatively minimal importance granted to Yemen prior to the coup.

Chapter 3, "Recognizing the New Republic," focuses on the first days of the new Yemeni republic, the secrecy surrounding Imam al-Badr's fate, and the hostile stance taken by the YAR towards Saudi Arabia. Egypt and Saudi Arabia were reluctantly drawn into the conflict, a policy decision that both countries attributed to legal and historical reasons. The chapter then focuses on the formation of al-Badr's tribal

opposition and the emerging relations between YAR and the Cold War superpowers and their respective decisions to recognize the republic.

Chapter 4, "Local Hostilities and International Diplomacy," delves into details of the first two years of fighting between Egyptian and royalist forces which included the Egyptian Ramadan and Haradh Offensives and multiple royalist counteroffensives. The chapter then looks at the role of republican and royalist postal policies during the war and the impact of American philatelist Bruce Condé on the royalist postal efforts.

Chapter 5, "The UN Yemen Observer Mission (UNYOM)," explores the international diplomatic efforts with a focus on the UN mission to Yemen. The chapter incorporates newly available UN and Canadian archival material in an attempt to further understand the function of the mission in Yemen and its impact on the broader conflict. A focus on the living conditions and operations of the mission's personnel helps clarify previous misrepresentations of the mission as an underfunded diplomatic failure.

Chapter 6, "Nasser's Cage", looks at the diplomatic conferences between 1964 and 1966 and Nasser's decision to pursue a "long-breath" defensive strategy. The chapter presents an analysis of US and Soviet perceptions of Nasser's foreign policy and Moscow's plans for a postwar alliance with the YAR. The chapter concludes with a discussion of Nasser's use of chemical weapons in Yemen and international reluctance to intervene.

Chapter 7, "The British and Israeli Clandestine War Against Egypt" tells the story of the Aden Group, a collection of Conservative British politics who clandestinely intervened to help train and supply royalist tribesmen. The group's activities attracted the attention and participation of the Israeli intelligence agency and air force in aiding

anti-Nasser forces. This participation had a profound impact on the Israeli decision to attack Egypt in June 1967.

Chapter 1: The Anglo-Egyptian Rivalry

British Capture of Aden

Between 1835 and 1837, British Captain Stafford Bettesworth Haines made two expeditionary trips to Aden, assessing it to be a suitable port for trade on the Red Sea. Captain James MacKenzie of the Bengal Light Cavalry, conducted similar surveys in 1837, noting that Muhammad Ali's army, which had been consolidating its position in Yemen since 1832, was poised to move southwards and capture the port of Aden.[1] Ali's army was sent to Yemen at the behest of the Ottoman Empire to crush the Wahhabi tribal revolt in the Hijaz, an area encompassing the holy cities of Mecca and Medinah. When hundreds of Egyptians were reported to have garrisoned the Yemeni port city of Mocha on June 22, 1837, the British Foreign Office estimated that it was only a matter of time until Muhammad Ali's forces secured the entire Arabian Peninsula.[2] Beyond the Red Sea trade, Yemen itself was estimated to be a valuable asset to Ali as it was, and continues to be, the most populous country on the Arabian Peninsula.[3] The impending Egyptian conquest of Aden would have serious ramifications for British commerce in the Red Sea and the security of India and its trade routes. Moreover, the expansion of Egyptian control on the Arabian Peninsula

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[1] Eric Marco, *Yemen and the Western World*. London: Hurst, 1968, 27. From the 17th Century, coffee was the principle and most valuable export from Yemen. Traders from Western Europe and the Americas competed for rights to Yemeni ports and access to the coffee agricultural markets. Prior to the War of 1812, British traders had been a fixture in the western Yemeni port of Mocha. During the 1820s and 1830s, however, American shipping, taking advantage of post-Napoleonic wars trade disruption, assumed the dominant trading position in Mocha, forcing the British to look elsewhere for a South Arabian shipping hub.

[2] British Library, R/20/E/1, June 22, 1837

[3] R.J. Gavin, *Aden Under British Rule*: 1839-1967. London: C. Hurst & Company, 1975, 25. The British began warning Muhammad Ali about his expeditions in Arabia as early as 1825 for fear that he would endanger the route to India. Ibrahim's troops entered Yemen in 1831 with the intention of conquering South Arabia.

would continue to threaten the relative stability of the Ottoman Empire and the balance of power in the region.

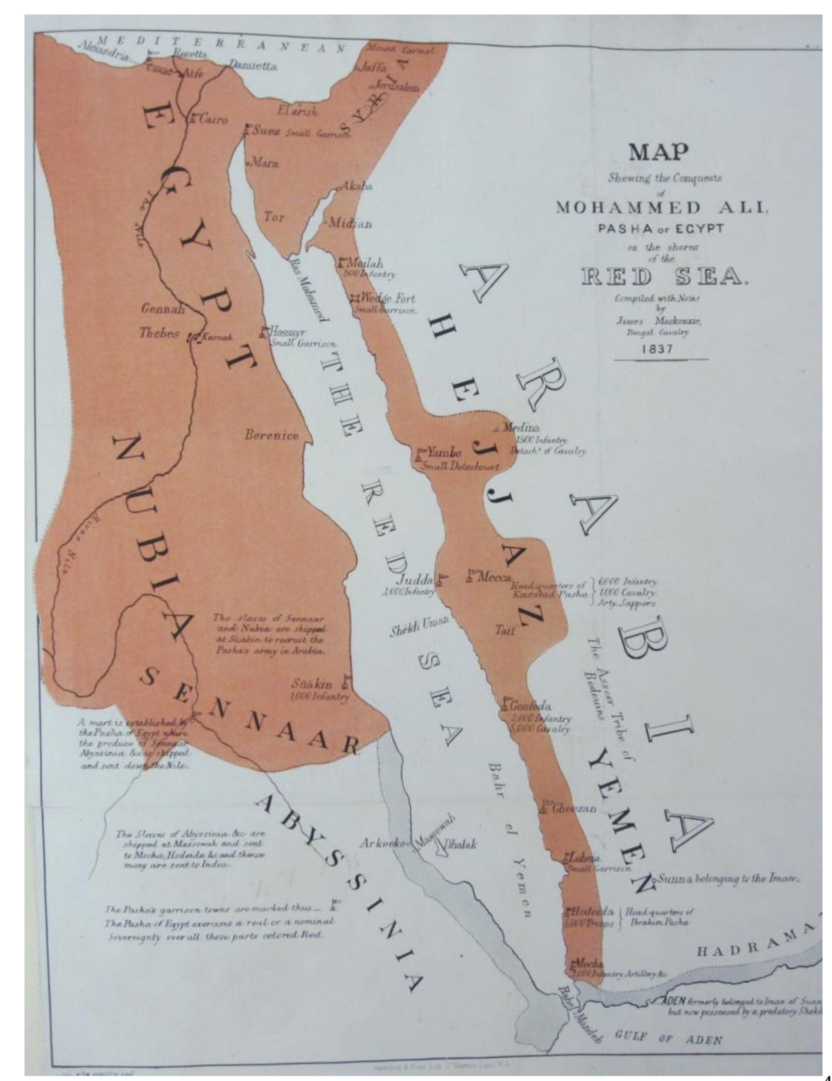


Figure 1.1 Muhammad Ali's Red Sea conquests through 1837. [4]

In January 1837 the merchant ship, Deria Dawlat, owned by the *Nawab* (ruler) of the Carnatic and sailing under the British flag left from India carrying dozens of Muslim passengers on their way to Mecca for the annual Hajj pilgrimage. After it unexpectedly crashed into the rocky shores of Aden, tribal members under the leadership of the Sheikh of Aden plundered the British ship and apprehended many of the surviving

[4] British Library, IOR: R/20/E/5.

passengers. In subsequent events, later clarified by detailed testimonies offered to a tribunal in Bombay, the passengers were stripped naked and brought to shore. The men were jailed while the women were harassed by the local inhabitants of Aden. The Sheikh forced them, under threat of death, to sign an affidavit declaring that they had not been mistreated. After receiving a coarse waist covering and some food, several passengers found passage to Mocha where they were forced to beg for food in the streets. The surviving passengers eventually made their way to Jedda under the protection of a British captain who was passing through the area.[5]

According to the testimonies of two survivors, Syed Nooradeen and Peer Muhammad Mistree, the boat's crew behaved suspiciously before capsizing the boat off the shores of Aden. Syed was a resident of Bombay on his way to the Hajj in Mecca with the female members of his family and a number of servants. Syed had noticed that no one had been steering the ship as it careened towards the shore. He repeatedly asked the crew to take the helm but to no avail.[6] Syed was sequestered in Aden while his wife was taken captive by a local ruler and was raped. She returned to her husband crying relating that she had been told: "your husband is now poor, he has nothing for you to eat, you had better come and live in my house with me."

Peer Muhammad, the ship's carpenter, and one of what he counted as 25 survivors, testified that the crew made no effort to clear the ship from the rocky Aden coast. If anything, it seemed that they had intentionally directed the ship towards the shore to precipitate the subsequent international crisis.[7] Other survivors corroborated these two lengthy testimonies leading many to suspect that the sinking of the Deria Dawlat

[5] British Library, R/20/E/1, July 6, 1837

[6] British Library, R/20/E/1, August 2-3, 1837

[7] *Ibid.*

seemed intentional. Having originally scouted Aden as a potential coaling port for the Indian Navy, Captain Haines, under the aegis of the British East Indies Company, took advantage of this incident off the coast of Aden, to occupy Aden, posing a major impediment to Egyptian imperial goals. According to his correspondence with the India office and his recollection of the events, one can surmise that he may have been involved in orchestrating this event in order to manufacture a crisis in Aden. To further corroborate this tale of intrigue, it was later uncovered that the *Nawab* of the Carnatic had purchased additional insurance on the Deria Dawlat, prior to its date of embarkation, in an amount that exceeded the value of the ship. The Sultan of Aden, had long developed a reputation as a brigand and pirate, and was sure to take advantage of a defenseless merchant ship wrecked on his shores.[8]

While this incident was occurring in Aden, Captain Haines was in the Yemeni port of Mocha, ostensibly surveying trade opportunities on the Red Sea. When he received word of the crash, he immediately traveled to Aden to document the investigation and begin preliminary negotiations with the Sheikh of Aden. After receiving approval from the Bombay Government, who was eager to use the incident as an excuse to acquire the port, Haines returned to Aden to negotiate the purchase of the port from the Sheikh in November 1837. The Sheikh initially demanded an outrageous price $50,000 annual payment for the lease of the port. When Haines returned to negotiate a more reasonable price, he discovered that the Sheikh had been plotting to kidnap and murder him and was forced to return to Bombay with little prospects of purchasing the port. It became increasing evident that Aden might only be acquired through use of force.[9]

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[8] Gavin, *Aden*, 28. Gavin suggests that the Nawab of the Carnatic colluded with the Sultan of Aden who was known to have been a brigand and a pirate. There were rumors that the Nawab may had offered him a portion of the insurance collection.

[9] Zaka Hanna Kour, *The History of Aden, 1839-1872 (*London: Frank Cass & Co., 1981), 8-11. Haines returned to Aden in November 1838 for additional negotiations from the safety of a

On March 26, 1838 the British Colonial Secret Council met in Bombay to discuss Muhammad Ali's expanding Egyptian empire and its repercussions for the British Empire. They discussed Captain *Haines' "free purchase of Aden" proposal. Although members of the Government of Bombay deemed the military procurement of the Aden to be a dangerous and unnecessary provocation of Egypt, they perceived the situation as an epic confrontation with Egyptian imperialism:*

> "there is but one power in that [Arabia] region, whose views or feelings on that subject are worth a moment's regard; and to that Power it will be a matter of profound indifference whether we gain the port in question by force, fraud, or favor, so as we gain it at all. Probably no sight more hateful could visit the eyes of Muhammad Ali, than that of the British Design flying over the promontory of Aden."[10]

The Secret Council viewed Muhammad Ali as an ambitious ruler equaling, if not surpassing, the global threat of the French and Russian Empires.

> "Since first obtaining possession of Egypt by an act of shocking perfidy and cruelty, his career has been uniform. By treason to his acknowledged sovereign, he has extended his sway over the heart of Africa…His next adventure will be on Baghdad, and on the western shores of the Persian Gulf; and, if once permitted to the Straits of Bab al-Mandib, he never rest till he has stretched his power along the whole cost of Arabia. The object of Muhammad Ali is evident the plans to erect Egypt, Syria, and Arabia, into an independent Kingdom; and, whenever it suits the views of France or of Russia to abet him in accomplishing that purpose, he will gladly league with wither of those powers against England."[11]

The council concluded that the British occupation of Aden was indeed a retribution for the embarrassment of the Deria Dawlat and could potentially curtail the threat of Egyptian Imperialism, by blocking Muhammad Ali's plans for Arabian and Red Sea dominance.

British ship in the harbor. The Sheikh of Aden answered his proposals with gun shots, forcing Haines to appeal to Bombay for reinforcement, having concluded that the city would be taken by force.

[10] British Library, R/20/E/1, March 26, 1838

[11] Ibid.

> "It is distinctively known that as one object amidst his ambitious schemes, Muhammad Ali has for some time contemplated the subjugation of Aden. He cannot therefore but view with great displeasure the anticipation of his design by the British government…If we withdraw from Aden, and Muhammad Ali plants his foot there, the plea of priority becomes his, and our hopes of superseding him are extinguished forever. We are then at his mercy, and can establish no coal depot for our Red Sea steamers, at a station worth having, which will not be under his control."[12]

In an effort to further justify the planned British acquisition of Aden, Captain Haines reported to the Colonial Office that with good management, the Aden harbor had the potential to be a hub for Yemeni coffee trade and a transshipment station for English and Indian goods and trade with the African coastline. The "barbarian tribes around the port would gladly place themselves under the [British] to secure them from the dominion of the Pasha of Egypt". Haines warned that "if we allow the Egyptian flag to be hoisted at Aden we are at the mercy of Mehmed Ali Pasha".[13] Providing further encouragement, Patrick Campbell, British Agent and Consul-General in Egypt reported to Foreign Secretary Lord Palmerston that the French Consul in Egypt had been encouraging Muhammad Ali to take possession of Aden. The French convinced Ali that British occupation of Aden would threaten Egyptian trade and sovereignty. Ali's relationship with Britain's rival, France, was cause for additional disdain towards the Egyptian ruler.[14]

Throughout the 1830s, Henry John Temple, Third Viscount, Lord Palmerston, developed a personal contempt for Muhammad Ali, whom he accused of establishing state monopolies only to secure a huge profit for himself. In 1839, Palmerston wrote: "The fact is, that Mehmet Ali has divided the population of Egypt into two classes the

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[12] *Ibid.*

[13] British Library, R/20/E/1, September 23, 1837

[14] The National Archives (TNA). FO 373/78, 99, Campbell to Palmerston, February 1, 1839.

Rich and the Poor. The rich class consists of Mehmet Ali himself singly and alone; the poor class of all the other inhabitants of Egypt."[15] As the conflict with Egypt continued, Palmerston took an increasing vitriolic stance towards the Egyptian *wali*, writing:

> "I hate Mehmet Ali, whom I consider as nothing but an ignorant barbarian, who by cunning and boldness and mother-wit, has been successful in rebellion;…I look upon his boasted civilization of Egypt as the arrantest humbug; and I believe that he is as great a tyrant and oppressor as ever made a people wretched."[16]

Having been persuaded by Haines' arguments and by the Committee's fear of Egyptian Imperialism, Sir Robert Grant, the Governor of Bombay, issued orders to negotiate with the Shiekh of Aden to take possession of the port in compensation for grievances related to the Deria Dawlat:[17] "The insult which has been offered to the British flag by the Sultan of Aden has led me to enquiries which leave no doubt on my mind that we should take possession of the port of Aden."[18]

Captain Henry Smith[19] and the HMS Volage led a small reinforcement flotilla of three other ships to address the situation in Aden. Acting as political agent in Aden, Captain Haines confirmed in a letter to Captain Smith on January 16, 1839, that despite "all the reasoning and every strenuous endeavor," negotiations with the locals had failed. According to his assessment, a forceful occupation of Aden was "the only resource left to obtain satisfaction for the repeated insult offered to the British." He justified the impending invasion as a way to secure the safety and well-being of the

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[15] Sir Charles Webster, *The Foreign Policy of Palmerston, 1830-1841: Britain, the Liberal Movement and the Eastern Question* (London: G. Bell and Sons, 1951), 275. Written on June 23, 1838.

[16]Letitia W. Ufford, *The Pasha: How Mehmet Ali Defied the West, 1839-1841* (London: McFarland & Company, 2007), 85.

[17] British Library, R/20/E/1, October 16, 1837.

[18] *Parliamentary Papers, House of Commands and Commands*. 1839, Volume XL, 54.

[19] Captain Henry Smith was more senior than Captain Haines, and was therefore called upon to lead the expedition.

"poor inhabitants of Aden who have been compelled by the chieftains to remain there, consisting principally of Jews, Banians, and Zoories." In this same letter, Haines made the case for his candidacy for a governing position in Aden, as he claimed to have "a perfect knowledge of the localities of the place." [20]

In a letter from Captain Haines to Campbell, after capturing the port of Aden on the morning of January 19, 1839, he reiterated that Muhammad Ali had wanted all of Yemen, the Red Sea, and a monopoly of Arabian imports. Haines claimed to have received word, only days before the British invasion, of an Egyptian attack on Shiekh Sherzebee of Hauzherea, a major coffee producer just north of Aden:

> "A report has reached me that the Egyptian force under Ibrahim Pashah has conquered nearly the whole of the Sherzeebee Chieftan's territory and that a division of the army under Muhammad Bey are besieging a fort so close to Lahej that the report of the guns were heard there. Should this prove true, I cannot but inquire the Egyptian General has been playing a secret game to our detriment."[21]

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[20] *The Asiatic journal and monthly register for British and foreign India, China and Australasia*, Volume 28, Allen, 1839, 317. In his account of the capture of Aden, R. J. Gavin makes reference to contacts with the Jews of Aden as the key to Haines' initial success in the port city. Zoories seem to refer to a group of Japanese merchants. Banians are a caste of Indian on Bengalese money lenders and merchants.

[21] British Library, R/20/A/8, January 6, 1839, 34.

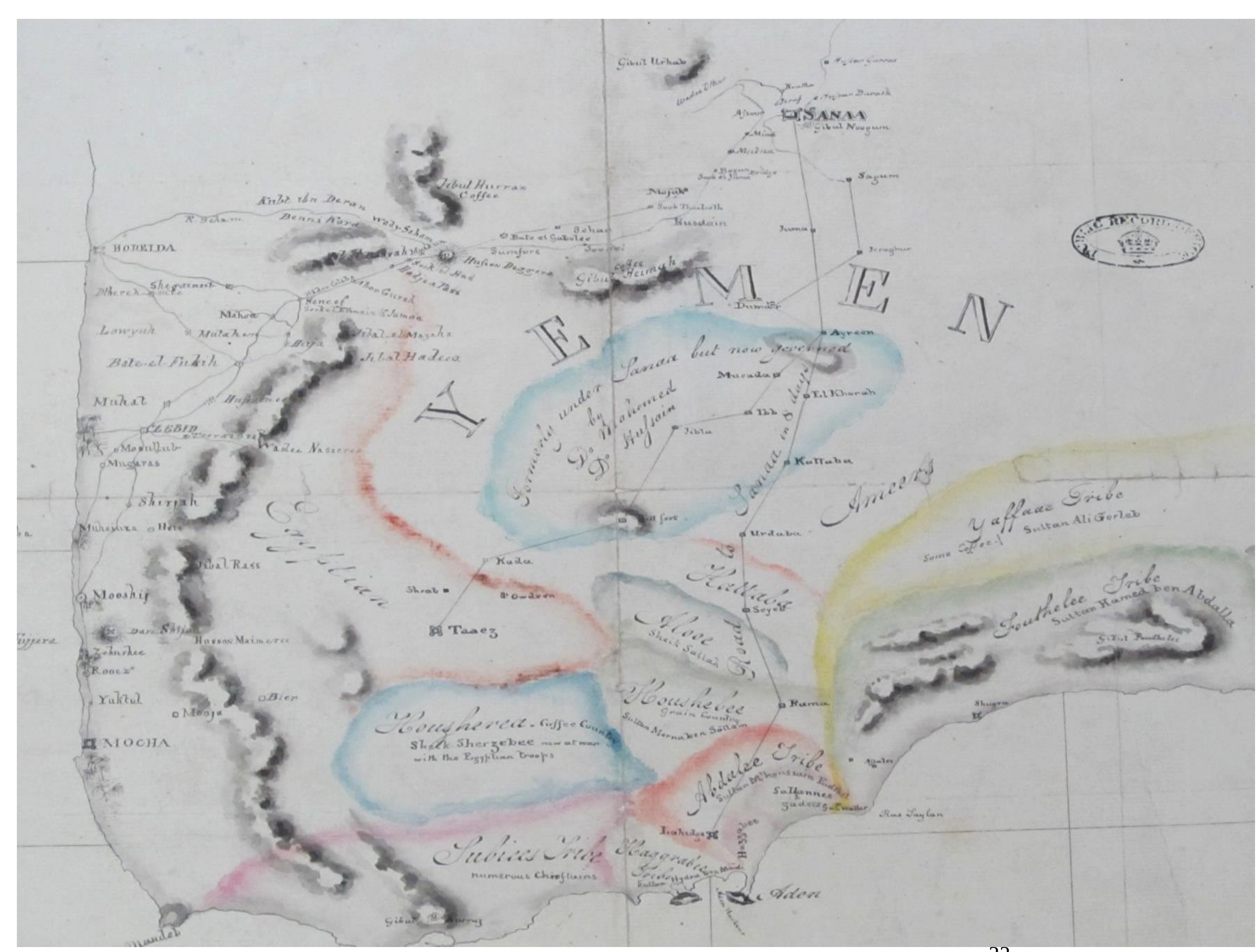


Fig. 1.2 Muhammad Ali’s expeditions in Yemen through 1839.[22]

Without a British presence in Aden, it would be only matter of time before Ali conquered Sana’a, the capital of South Arabia, thereby giving him regional political control. Haines believed that the interior tribes looked to the British for support to stop the Egyptian advance and reopen Yemeni roads to commerce.[23] Sheikh Sherzebee, for example, informed Haines that he was relying on the British to keep the trade route open through Aden, as the Sheikh had declined to submit his territory to Egyptian rule. This statement was detrimental for the Egyptians as the Sheikh was a large coffee

[22] British Library, IOR: R/20/E/5. Notice the area highlighted in blue connoting an active battle with Egyptian forces.

[23] TNA, FO 78/373, 101, February 28, 1839.

producer and his absence would detract from the importance of the Mocha port currently under Ali's control.[24]

Concurrent French commercial expeditions to Mocha created further alarm in London about European competition in Arabia, which was passed on to Haines. Haines sent Captain Robert Moresby to negotiate with local chiefs in order to create a loyal hinterland around Aden through the direct purchase of adjacent land and distribution of subsidies to outlying tribes.[25] For example, Sultan Ali Muhsin of Lahej chose to collude with Haines and the British as the Egyptian army was stationed north of his border in Ta'iz. From his perspective, the British were seen as a guarantor of his independence.[26] Many of these same tribes would become part of the Federation of South Arabian States during the 1950s and 60s, a product of British hegemony in 20th Century South Arabia.

Captain Smith sent a full report of the capture of Aden to Rear Admiral Sir Frederick L. Maitland, the East India station commander-in-chief.[27] The Aden fortress was captured with ease as the British ships had docked close to shore before first light to avoid the towers' cannons aimed further out into sea. The British flag was planted on the walls of Aden by the quartermaster of the ship, Captain Rundle, who was the first one ashore and who would later depict the capture of Aden in a number of paintings. Despite the estimated 1,000 defenders of the fortress, the British suffered

[24] British Library, R/20/A/8, February 25, 1839, 67.

[25] Marco, *Yemen and the Western World,* 33.

[26] Gavin, *Aden,* 35.

[27] This is the same Sir Maitland who accepted Napoleon's surrender aboard the *HMS Bellerophon* on July 15, 1815 following his defeat in the Battle of Waterloo. Maitland would go on to write a historical account of Napoleon's time aboard his ship.

only two casualties[28] and captured the port in less than three hours through a combination of overwhelming firepower from their four ships and the decrepit state of the opponents' weapons. Due credit was given to Captain Haines for leading the expedition and full confidence was given to him in maintaining the British position in Aden while Captain Smith made plans for his return trip.[29]



[30]Fig. 1.3

On March 27, 1839, Patrick Campbell, reported to Lord Palmerston that the port of Aden had been secured and that he no longer thought that Muhammad Ali would

[28] William Henry G. Kingston, *Our Sailors: Anecdotes of the British Navy During the Reign of Queen Victoria* (Charleston: Nabu Press, 2010), 2. Kingston claims that there were sixteen casualties including one naval officer Nisbet of the East India Company. Kingston also observed that during the first few years of Queen Victoria's reign, the "blue-jackets" of the British navy did little actual fighting, but did look to instigate the occasional skirmish along the African coast or in nearby seas to maintain their relevance. Aden was one of these instances.

[29] *The Asiatic journal and monthly register for British and foreign India, China and Australasia*, Volume 28, Allen, 1839, 316.

[30] British Museum, Captain Rundle Collection, Image AN1329842001.

threaten the British port or British trade routes along the Red Sea as a result.[31] Palmerston's response to Campbell claimed that Muhammad Ali had marched an expedition force to Mocha with the intention of attacking Sana'a in October 1838 and continuing further south to the tip of the Arabian Peninsula. The British possession of Aden, however, succeeded in halting Ali's advance. Palmerston instructed Campbell to inform Ali that the British did not support continued Egyptian occupation of Yemen and request a withdrawal. Campbell was to encourage Ali to "engage in improving the administration of the Provinces confided to His Government instead of employing the energies of his mind and the resources of the countries he governs in, in aggressive expeditions against neighboring districts."[32] Although the occupation of Aden was further justified by the commercial potential of Yemen's coffee trade and of the utility of an Aden coal station, it was clear to all that the real purpose of conquering Aden was primarily to counter Egyptian imperialism.[33] Aden would serve in that same role during the 1960s.

The Suez Group and the Anti-Nasser Movement

Muhammad Ali's imperial ambition was adopted by the Egyptian successor to Ali's dynasty, Gamal Abdel Nasser when he rose to power in 1954.[34] In his treatise, *The*

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[31] British Library, R/20/E/3, March 27, 1838

[32] British Library, R/20/E/3, May 12, 1838

[33] Karl Pieragostoni, *Britain, Aden, and South Arabia: Abandoning* Empire, (New York: Macmillan, 1991), 21. Pieragostoni agrees that the occupation of Aden was a check to Ali's expansion in Syria and the Arabian Peninsula. He adds that the geographic location of Aden added a level of importance in protecting the route to India.

[34] Elie Kedourie, "Egypt, the Arab State and the Suez Expedition, 1956," in *Imperialism and Nationalism in the Middle East: The Anglo-Egyptian Experience 1882-1982,* ed. Keith M. Wilson. (London: Mansell Publishing Limited, 1983), 123-4. Two of Muhammad Ali's descendants made efforts to continue Ali's legacy. Khedive Abbas Hilmi (1892-1914) tried to wrest control of the Caliphate from the Ottoman Empire. King Fu'ad (1917-36) tried to refocus the Islamic world around Cairo after Mustafa Kemal Ataturk abolished the Ottoman Caliphate in 1924. Neither attempt succeeded, but both were evidence of the continuation of Ali's imperial ideal.

Philosophy of the Revolution, published in 1955, Nasser portrays himself as the inheritor of a century of incomplete Egyptian revolutions. Beginning with Muhammad Ali's failed experiment at representing the Egyptian people, Nasser highlighted Urabi's Revolt in 1881 and Sa'ad Zaghloul's failed 1919 revolution. The Free Officers Revolution on July 23, 1952, Nasser claimed, was the realization of Egyptian aspirations for nationhood since the founding of the modern Egypt state under Muhammad Ali.[35] The expansion of Egyptian power and influence had been at the core of Muhammad Ali's appeal to the Egyptian people and was the cornerstone of Nasser's foreign policy as well. Rather than marching an army of conquest through Sudan and the Arabian Peninsula, however, Nasser saw the expansion of his influence through anti-imperialist rhetoric and military support for regional allies as manifested in his personal Arab nationalist ideology, *Nasserism*.

Nasserism has been characterized as an ideology, cult of personality, modernization effort, anti-colonialist movement, or a form of populism. Nasser sought to modernize the Egyptian nation state, in a similar manner that Muhammad Ali attempted to develop Egyptian modernization according to the European model.[36] Under both Ali and Nasser, particular emphasis was given to the modernization of the Egyptian countryside and the *fellahin.*[37] Walid Khalidi describes Nasserism as an "attitude" of the people,

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[35] Gamal Abdel Nasser, *The Philosophy of the Revolution* (Cairo: Dar al-Maaref, 1955).

[36] Maxime Rodinson, "The Political System," in *Egypt Since the Revolution,* edited by P. J. Vatikiotis (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1968), 87-113. Rodinson argues that the Free Officers' only aims were "modernization and independence".

[37] James B. Mayfield, *Rural Politics in Nasser's Egypt: A Quest for Legitimacy* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1971. Mayfield argues that although Nasser concentrated primarily on foreign policy, he pursed a belated attempt to bring modernity to Egypt's countryside.

rather than an ideology like Marxism or Socialism.[38] At the core of this "attitude" was an anti-imperialist drive and a sense of pan-Arab identity.

P. J. Vatikiotis argues that, rather than an ideology, Nasserism was an authoritarian cult of personality dependent entirely upon Nasser, "his vision, style, and approach to power."[39] This centrality of Nasser in the Egyptian state is similar to Khaled Fahmy's depiction of Muhammad Ali's dynastic empire. Nasser's ability to appeal to the masses of Egypt, the Arab world, and the developing world was itself the concept of Nasserism.[40] His charismatic authority, however, rested on his heroic performance, thereby necessitating constant success and foreign adventures abroad, an important factor when considering the Anglo-Egyptian rivalry.[41] In an edited volume published fifty years after Nasser's rise to power, Eli Podeh and Onn Winckler argue that Nasserism was in fact a form of populism in the Arab world. His appeal to Egyptian peasantry and emphasis on mass public appearances resembles the Latin American populist model and Ali's *fellahin*-directed economic reform and military modernization. Like Ali, Nasser's populism rested on his ability to appeal to the *fellahin* and the general population through continued efforts against imperialism and the British in particular.[42]

Despite these similarities, Nasser's revolution was not explicitly a reincarnation of Muhammad Ali's empire, aside from elements of historical continuity and a very

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[38] Walid Khalidi, "Political Trends in the Fertile Crescent," in *The Middle East in Transition*, ed. Walter Z. Laqueur (New York: F.A. Praeger, 1958).

[39] P.J. Vatikiotis, *Nasser and his Generation*, (New York: Croom Helm, 1978).

[40] Elie Podeh and Onn Winckler, *Rethinking Nasserism: Revolution and Historical Memory in Modern Egypt* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2004), 2.

[41] Podeh and Winckler, *Rethinking Nasserism*, 18.

[42] *Ibid*.

compelling narrative. After all, Nasser's rise to power came at the expense of King Farouk, the last ruling member of Muhammad Ali's dynasty. Nonetheless, Nasser's rise to power and his ability to challenge British hegemony in the region, helped bring about the intersection of declining British power and rising Egyptian influence in the Middle East for the first time following the rule of Muhammad Ali. The reemergence of the Anglo-Egyptian clash of equals reintroduced many of the racial, economic, and strategic concerns harbored by British officials during the 19th Century, albeit from the perspective of events that had occurred in the 1950s.

As if echoing Palmerston's concerns over Muhammad Ali, British Prime Minister Anthony Eden considered Nasser an embodiment of all the threats to British hegemony including the balance of power in the Middle East, British oil supplies, economic export, and general national livelihood.[43] British statesmen during the 1950s and 60s reused much of the Muhammad Ali era language to describe Egyptian colonialist involvement in Yemen during the 1960s, thereby introducing a second phase of Anglo-Egyptian imperial rivalry. During a cabinet meeting on November 25, 1955, Conservative Member of Parliament (MP) Julian Amery, stated that "every Egyptian Government must embark on a policy of foreign adventure".[44] In his maiden speech as an MP on the floor of the House of Commons on March 7, 1956, Colonel Neil 'Billy' McLean observed: "I feel that our Egyptian friends and the Egyptian government must

[43] Jonathan Pearson, *Sir Anthony Eden and the Suez Crisis: Reluctant Gamble* (Palgrave Macmillan: London, 2003), 18.

[44] Macmillan Papers, Oxford Bodleian Library. MS Macmillan.dep.C.431. November 23, 1955. Julian Amery would later serve as Minister of Aviation from 1962-4 and was fundamental in orchestrating mercenary operations in Yemen.

realize that admiration for Egypt is not the same thing as love for Egyptian imperialism".[45]

On July 26, 1956, when Nasser nationalized Suez Canal Company, British condemnation of the Egyptian President grew more vitriolic. The Canal was immensely important for the British. Every year, six million tons of oil passed through canal with two-thirds allotted for Western Europe fuel requirements. Britain in particular was dependent on trade passing through the Canal. In 1955, for example, 14,666 ships passed through Canal, with one-third destined for British ports, and three-quarters for NATO countries in total.[46] British newspapers expressed the views of the British public describing the nationalization as "an act of brigandage",[47] claiming that "the time for appeasement is over. We must cry 'Halt' to Nasser as we should have cried 'Halt!' to Hitler. Before he sets the Middle East aflame, as Hitler did to Europe."[48]

Given his position as Prime Minister in 1956, Anthony Eden logically received a great deal of blame in the historical critique of the Suez Crisis. More apologetic and pro-Eden historians have been keen to absolve Eden of complete responsibility for the 1956 fiasco. They argue that Anthony Eden did not willingly pursue military options in Egypt. Rather, he was forced into the Suez War by a combination of domestic political

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[45] Xan Fielding, *One Man in His Time: The Life of Lieutenant-Colonel NLD ('Billy') McLean, DSP* (Macmillan: London, 1990), 103. McLean made his first speech 15 months after first being elected to office. This was indicative of his shadowy style of politics as he preferred the adventurous exploration to the parliamentary debate. (Sue Onslow, "Unreconstructed Nationalists and a Minor Gunboat Operation: Julian Amery, Neil McLean and the Suez Crisis," *Contemporary British History* 20 (2006): 73-99.)

[46] Robert Rhodes James, "Eden," In *The Suez-Sinai Crisis 1956: Retrospective and Reappraisal*, ed. Selwyn Ilan Troen and Moshe Shemesh, 100-109 (London: Frank Cass, 1990), 106.

[47] *The Times* 28 July, 1956.

[48] *Daily Mail* 28 July, 1956. Populist-Conservative newspaper.

pressures, his own failing health, American reluctance to act, and pressure from Israel and France.[49] Whether these reasons account for Eden's decision-making in 1956 is a matter of debate. What is not debatable, however, is the political drama that overran Whitehall during the 1950s regarding the Anglo-Egyptian rivalry. At the core of the anti-Nasser coalition in the British government was a group of twenty six Conservative Party MPs, headed by Captain Charles Waterhouse, a longtime MP and a senior advisor in the Privy Council.[50] Known as the Suez Group, Waterhouse's coalition was a last vestige of swashbuckling British soldiers and administrators who continued to view themselves as global kingmakers through the end of the 1960s.[51]

The group rose to prominence following the October 19, 1954 British agreement with Egypt to withdraw British troops from the region, in exchange for the maintenance of the Suez Canal as a vital British base. The Suez Group believed that their subsequent anti-Egyptian posture was representative of the general sentiments of the British public.[52] The members of the group were still intent on maintaining remnants of the British Empire at a time when the U.S. under President Eisenhower was pushing a policy of decolonization. Having grown impatient with the lack of American support for continued British presence in the Middle East, some went as far as proposing an alliance with the Soviet Union, trying to convince the Russians that a British presence

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[49] Pearson, *Sir Anthony Eden.* Pearson combines all of these arguments in his defense of Eden's actions in 1956.

[50] Julian Amery, "The Suez Group: A Retrospective on Suez." in *The Suez-Sinai Crisis 1956: Retrospective and Reappraisal*, ed. Selwyn Ilan Troen and Moshe Shemesh, (London: Frank Cass, 1990), 110. Julian Amery met him by chance in Cape Town in January 1953. Although the core group was 26, there were a total of 40 MPs associated with the Suez Group.

[51] Clive Jones, *Britain and the Yemen Civil War 1962-1965* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2004), 18.

[52] *Ibid*, 112.

in Middle East would be better than an American takeover.[53] Karl Pieragostini observed that during the 1950s and 60s British officials, specifically those of the Suez Group, saw themselves as locked in a battle with Nasser for the future of South Arabia and the British role in the Middle East.[54] This group, however, was held together by more than their disdain for Nasser. A combination of political intrigue, familial ties, and close friendship brought together the members of the Suez Group to exert influence on a decade of British foreign policy in the Middle East.

The political origins of the Suez Group can be traced back to the anti-appeasement coalition of the 1930s which included most notably Winston Churchill and his protégé Anthony Eden. Between 1951 and 1955, Eden, who served as Foreign Secretary and Deputy Prime Minister under Churchill, was instrumental in formulating British foreign policy globally and in the Middle East in particular. On January 29, 1953, Eden returned from a meeting with his Egyptian counterpart during which they had been negotiating the independence of Sudan and the withdrawal from the Suez Canal. Upon hearing news of progress in the negotiations, Churchill reprimanded Eden as a failed Foreign Secretary and claimed that his former partner in "anti-appeasement" in the 1930s was now practicing a policy of appeasement in the Middle East. Churchill claimed that he "never know before that Munich was situated on the Nile."[55] After Churchill retired in 1955, Eden succeeded him as Prime Minister, but could not avoid Churchill's continued criticism. Eden's Foreign Secretary and later Chancellor of the

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[53] *Ibid*, 119.

[54] Pieragostoni, *Britain, Aden, and South Arabia*, 5. His argument is somewhat overstated in that he does not substantiate the significance of Aden for British global strategy other than the historical coincidence that the war with Nasser took place during the final years of the British Empire.

[55] Evelyn Shuckburgh, *Descent to Suez: Diaries 1951-56* (London: W.W. Norton and Company, 1986).

Exchequer, Harold Macmillan, with his eyes on the Prime Minister position himself, willingly joined with members of the Suez Group along with Churchill in undermining Eden's foreign policy with Egypt.

Although not an official member of the Suez Group himself, Churchill acted as the group's ideological and political mentor. Churchill's most influential political analysis often occurred while intoxicated or enraged. In a conversation with his doctor Lord Maron, Churchill shared a blunt opinion of Nasser: "Whoever he is he's finished after this. We can't have that malicious swine sitting across our communications."[56] Churchill's unfavorable opinion of the Egyptians did not exclusively or specifically target Nasser, but predated his rise to power. In October 1951, the *Wafd*, the Egyptian nationalist part, unilaterally abrogated the 1936 Anglo-Egyptian treaty, declaring victory over British imperialism. Subsequent protests near the Suez Canal presented a serious political crisis for the British. In a meeting with Anthony Eden, during a moment of exasperation, Prime Minister Churchill approached him with clenched fists and a growl saying, "tell [the Egyptians] that if we have any more of their cheek we will set the Jews on them and drive them into the gutter, from which they should never have emerged."[57]

The Suez Group's image was of "backwoodsmen – a motley collection of colorful, marginal political eccentrics." They formed backbench pressure on the cabinet and were central to Conservative Party thought during the 1950s and later during the 1960s

[56] Sir Charles Watson, *Winston Churchill: The Struggle for Survival* (New York: Carroll and Graf Publishers, 2006), 735. Towards the end of his political tenure in 1955, it is unclear how often Churchill could be found sober and not irritated.

[57] Shuckburgh, *Descent to Suez*, 29. Diary entry from December 16, 1951. Churchill continued the evening reminiscing over past trips to the Middle East which seemed to interest him more than the current crisis in Egypt.

under a different name.[58] During the 1950s, the group consisted of two types of members. The elderly contemporaries of Churchill included Loran Hankey, the Director of the Suez Canal Company, Leo Amery, a close confidant of Churchill's anti-appeasement Munich coalition during the 1930s (he died in 1955), and Lord Killearn, the ex-Ambassador to Egypt and the author of the 1942 coup in Egypt. The other consisted of young Tories such as Enoch Powell the well-known moral critic of British policy in Kenya, Fitzroy MacLean who had served under Churchill's WWII command in Cairo, and Julian Amery.[59]

The Suez Group's pressure on Prime Minister Eden continued at the Conservative Party conference in Llandudno, Wales from October 11-13, 1956, compelling him to further consider military action against Egypt. Waterhouse and Julian Amery introduced a party amendment that stipulated the specific requirement that any agreement with Nasser must ensure the international control of the Suez Canal. The Suez Group's influence did not stop at party headquarters, but gained the sympathy of media figures as well. Malcolm Muggeridghe of the *Daily Telegraph* and Randolph Churchill of the *Evening Standard* and *Daily Express*, for example, vilified Eden as a Munich politician (appeaser) and supported the more hawkish Macmillan.[60]

In his effort to supplant Eden as Prime Minister, Macmillan was able to rely heavily on the support of his son-in-law Julian Amery, a Conservative member of Parliament and the son of the prominent British political Leo Amery.[61] Julian Amery's passionate and energetic patriotism is often attributed to the fate of his brother John, who was

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[58] *Ibid*, 69.

[59] Keith Kyle, *Suez: Britain's End of Empire in the Middle East* (London: IB Tauris, 2011), 40.

[60] Pearson, *Sir Anthony Eden*, 140.

[61] Kyle, *Suez*, 42.

hung for treason in Wandsworth jail in December 1945.[62] Neil McLean, a "political soul-mate and inseparable friend"[63] of Julian Amery from their time serving together as intelligence officers in the Balkans, also assumed an important role in the group.[64] When Eden resigned in 1957 in the aftermath of the Suez political disaster, Queen Elizabeth took the advice of Churchill and appointed Macmillan as the next Prime Minister rather than Rab Butler, who was Eden's Deputy Prime Minister.[65]

According to Julian Amery's assessment, Nasser was within 48 hours of being overthrown and the British and French already had alternative government waiting. It was clear that the Soviets had withdrawn military support from Egypt and Nasser would likely flee Cairo with little resistance. As a consequence of the Suez failure, nicknamed the European "Waterloo" of the Middle East, a major power vacuum emerged. According to Amery, this vacuum was filled by two Arab-Israeli wars, the Egyptian invasion of Yemen, the murder of Nuri Al-Said and King Faisal in Baghdad, the rise of Muammar Qadafi in Libya, and the Sovietization of Aden and Ethiopia; in sum all of the region's problems. He believed this would never have happened if the British and French had been allowed to prevail in Suez.[66]

Although Amery's British-centric perspective of events in Egypt and the Middle East was certainly biased and influenced by personal interest, there is little doubt that American intervention in the Suez Crisis was a personal affront to the foreign policy

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[62] Sue Onslow, "Julian Amery and the Suez Operation," in *Reassessing Suez 1956: New Perspectives on the Crisis and its Aftermath*, ed. Simon C. Smith (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2008), 76.

[63] Onslow, "Unrestricted Nationalists and a Minor Gunboat Operation," 73.

[64] Onslow, "Julian Amery and the Suez Operation," 70.

[65] Harold Macmillan, *The Macmillan Diaries, The Cabinet Years, 1950–1957*, ed. Peter Catterall (London: Macmillan, 2003).

[66] Amery, "The Suez Group", 120.

aims of the Suez Group and an episode that they would not soon let the Americans forget. As Tore Peterson describes it, "Suez became a useful bludgeon to beat the American with in times of Anglo-American disagreement. After administrating defeat to the British during the Suez crisis, the Americans became extremely solicitous of its main ally."[67] John Darwin adds that "successive American administrations showed a surprising tenderness towards British pretensions to remain an independent great power."[68]

In 1957, in response to the British retreat from Egypt and Iraq, and the tenuous hold on military bases in Cyprus and Kenya, the Suez Group transformed the relatively minor British port of Aden into the center of British power in the region. The construction of the British Petroleum (BP) refinery in 1954 helped Aden become the fourth largest refueling station in the world.[69]

The Aden Group

In the years following the Suez War, McLean observed that "cotton and Suez Canal dues, have been mortgaged to the USSR…coupled with heavy government expenditures in prestige projects such as the Aswan dam and on military equipment from the Communist bloc countries has produced a large annual trade deficit which, in turn, has caused serious monetary inflation and a very low standard of living in Egypt."[70] McLean and Conservative members of the British Foreign Office argued that

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[67] Tore T. Peterson, "Post-Suez Consequences: Anglo-American Relations in the Middle East from Eisenhower to Nixon," in *Reassessing Suez 1956: New Perspectives on the Crisis and its Aftermath*, ed. Simon C. Smith (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2008), 216.

[68] John Darwin, *The End of the British Empire: The Historical Debate* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991), 60-1.

[69] Tom Bower, *The Perfect English Spy: Sir Dick White and the Secret War 1935-90* (London: Heinemann, 1995), 242.

[70] Imperial War Museum, Neil McLean Files, Box A.

Nasser aimed to expand his dominion over the Arabian Peninsula in an effort to stave off economic disaster in Egypt with the aid of Saudi oil money. Moreover, it was believed that North Yemen would serve as a haven for anti-British terrorists in Aden. According to Daniel Lerner, post-Suez Egypt suffered from the "Nasser Syndrome", or the "shift from home democracy to global imperialism".[71]

In the aftermath of the 1956 Suez War, Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser was intent on driving the British out of the Red Sea region and Aden in particular for fear that it would become a base to reestablish British influence over Egypt and the Suez Canal. Nasser would later describe himself as a "thorn in the British throat."[72] Aden, a port city initially captured as a deterrent to Egyptian nationalism, found itself once again at the forefront of the British-Egyptian imperial struggle. The last Anglo-Egyptian confrontation in Yemen, from 1962-1967, marked the bookend to a long history of British and Egyptian power relations in the Middle East.

Having failed to secure the Suez Canal in 1956, the Conservative remnants of the Suez Group turned their political intentions towards the last British military base in Aden. Following the arrival of Egyptian troops to North Yemen in October 1962, the group, under the leadership of Julian Amery and Neil McLean, would be renamed the Aden Group. Its anti-Egyptian and anti-Nasser agenda would remain the same. In the eyes of the Aden Group, the Yemeni Civil War was the second round of the final Anglo-Egyptian confrontation that began with the Suez War in 1956. In the eyes of the historian, however, the history of the Anglo-Egyptian rivalry in Yemen began over 100 years earlier, with the British capture of Aden in 1839.

[71] Daniel Lerner, *The Passing of Traditional Society: Modernizing the Middle East* (Glencoe: The Free Press, 1958).

[72] Gamal Abdel Nasser, *Speeches and Press-Interviews*, January-December 1963, 306, Address by President Gamal Abdel Nasser on the Occasion of the Seventh Anniversary of Victory Day at Port Said, December 23, 1963.

Chapter 2: International Intrigue and the Origins of September 1962

At 11:00 PM on September 26, 1962, a small column of T-34 tanks and armored vehicles, led by a tank that would be named al-Marid ("the Rebellious") entered the courtyard of Imam al-Badr's palace of Dar al-Basha'ir ("House of Good Tidings").[1] Al-Badr had been warned of an impending coup following his father Ahmad's death a week earlier, and gave the order for reinforcements from Hodeidah. In the meanwhile, he was surrounded by 500 to 600 personal bodyguards and had the services of several tribal armies and a special battalion of troops known as the "Badr Battalion". As al-Badr would find out, he could trust none of these groups.[2] When the vehicles arrived from the nearby al-Urdi military barracks[3], al-Badr was sitting in a political meeting with Yemeni Colonel Abdullah al-Sallal in attendance. The revolution was carried out with the help of 13 tanks from the Badr Batallion, six armored vehicles, two mobile artillery cannons, and two anti-air guns.[4]

According to al-Badr's version of the night's events, he had been presiding over the new Council of Ministers in the Royal Palace compound. When he stepped out into the hallway, Hussein al-Shukeiri, the deputy to Sallal, attempted to shoot him from behind in the hallway, but the rifle trigger jammed. He ended up shooting himself in the chin while al-Badr's guards were trying to arrest him. The palace's electricity was cut off, followed by an exchange of gunfire. Al-Badr claims that the resistance lasted for

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[1] Kevin Rosser, "Education, Revolt, and Reform in Yemen: The 'Famous Forty' Mission of 1947" (M.Phil diss. St. Antony's College, Oxford, 1998), 53.

[2] FRUS 1961-1963, Vol. XVIII, 51, Paper by the Person in charge of Arabian Peninsula Affairs (Seelye), September 20, 1962.

[3] Ali Abdel Rahman Rahmy, *The Egyptian Policy in the Arab World: Intervention in Yemen 1962-1967 Case Study* (Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1983).

[4] Y. Aboul-Enein, "The Egyptian-Yemen War (1962-67): Egyptian Perspectives on Guerilla Warfare," *Infantry*, January-February 2004.

twenty four hours during which he escaped from a hidden passageway out of the building. Al-Badr's account claims that a Yemeni officer named 'Abd al-Ghani was the principal ringleader, and the main contact for the Egyptian Embassy. Conveniently for al-Badr's tale, al-Ghani was killed during the initial exchange of fire and Sallal was given command of the coup.[5]

Timed to meet the arriving troops, Sallal excused himself from the meeting and exited the palace. Once outside, he directed the approaching tanks to aim their fire at al-Badr's residence. Simultaneously, another group of Yemeni soldiers seized the Sana'a radio station, announcing prematurely that Imam al-Badr had been killed and that Sallal and the military revolutionaries had declared the foundation of the Yemen Arab Republic (YAR).[6]

Whose revolution?

The debate, both during the civil war and in the academic literature in the following decades, has focused on the extent of Egyptian involvement in the planning and hatching of the coup.[7] There were certainly strategic advantages to Egyptian intervention. By 1962, Egypt was the most politically isolated country in the Middle East, following the breakup of the United Arab Republic with Syria and the formation

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[5] Saeed M. Badeeb, *The Saudi-Egyptian Conflict over North Yemen* 1962-1970,(Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1986), 118, Al-Badr Interview (December 21, 1983). Supposedly Hussein al-Sukary was still alive during the 1980s, albeit with a disfigured face. Abdel Ghani is a prominent Yemeni political family. Al-Badr's non-specific reference may be an indication of the dubious nature of certain parts of his account. During the time of this interview, Abdel Aziz Abdel Ghani was the acting Prime Minister of the YAR, perhaps explaining why al-Badr chose his family name as the head of the conspirators.

[6] Edgar O'Ballance, *The War in Yemen* (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1971), 68.

[7] The historian Gregory Gause claims emphatically that there is no disputing Egyptian foreknowledge and involvement in the coup, citing Baydani and two other Egyptian military memoirs as evidence (F. Gregory Gause, *Saudi-Yemeni Relations: Domestic Structures and Foreign Influence* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 59.

of a Jordanian-Saudi alliance.[8] Of the major Arab states, only Algeria maintained friendly relations with Egypt, while Iraq, Jordan, Tunisia, Morocco, Syria, and Saudi Arabia remained united in their disdain for Nasser's Middle East machinations.[9] Khaled Mohieddin, a prominent member of the Egyptian military later admitted that "The Yemen war was a response to the break with Syria…a sign that Egypt's Arab role was not over…as Syria was a blow to Egypt's Arab leadership."[10] Mohieddin had long believed that "Egypt could achieve far more with propaganda than with tanks" and lamented in retrospect at having "become trapped in so humiliating a situation."[11] According to Anthony Nutting, author of the well-known biography of Nasser, with a quick and decisive victory in Yemen, Nasser "might have been able to recover the leadership of the Arab world for more than just a fleeting moment."[12]

From a strategic perspective, it is not difficult to understand why Nasser might support the Yemen republic. Backing Abdullah Sallal might give Nasser a chance to regain his stature in the Arab World. Furthermore, the geographic location of Yemen would place Nasser in a unique position to pressure the Saudis for economic aid and aid anti-British nationalists in the south.[13] Belaboring the British with an internal colonial uprising would discourage their foreign office from considering another Suez mission

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[8] A. I. Dawisha, "Intervention in the Yemen: An Analysis of Egyptian Perceptions and Policies," *Middle East Journal* 29 (1975), 47.

[9] Jesse Ferris, *Nasser's Gamble: How Intervention in Yemen Caused the Six-Day War and the Decline of Egyptian Power* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013), 28.

[10] Tariq Habib, *Milaffat thawrat yuliyu shahadat 122 min sunnaiha wa-maasiriha (Cairo: Al Ahram*, 1997), 244.

[11] Anthony Nutting, *Nasser* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1972), 351.

[12] Nutting, *Nasser*, 338.

[13] Abdel Latif al Baghdadi argued that Nasser had never actually intended to confront the Saudi royal family militarily. Any confrontation that occurred was a consequence of the shifting battlefield and the Saudi support for al-Badr and the royalists (Habib, *Milaffat thawrat yuliyu*, 242).

and would give the Egyptians unchallenged military and political preeminence over both sides of the Red Sea.[14]

British colonial officials and Yemeni royalists, in an attempt to delegitimize the YAR as a foreign entity, predictably accused the Egyptians of orchestrating the entire event. The British colonial office associated the Yemeni coup with Nasser's anti-British agenda on the Arabian Peninsula. As early as nine months prior to the outbreak of hostilities in September, British intelligence officials believed that there was increasing evidence that Nasser was planning to undermine the Yemeni government. Italian Minister Guillet, a close confidant of the Yemeni Imam Ahmad, informed High Commissioner of Aden Charles Johnston that according to his sources, the Egyptians were proposing a 'New Operation' in Sudan, Saudi Arabia, and Yemen. The plans would supposedly be coordinated by agents of the Egyptian Intelligence Service.[15] Some British historical accounts claim that the Soviet KGB and their British agent Kim Philby played a role in the coup, although these claims are mostly speculative and without sufficient evidence.[16]

In January 1962, a Yemeni assailant known only as Qunbula, or "the grenade", attacked and injured R. W. Bailey, the UK *chargé d'affaires* in Ta'iz. Bailey would later recount the story and describe it as a harbinger of things to come:

> "Not long before the Revolution…the very kind gentleman called El-qunbula or 'the Bomb' put a dagger into me. He knocked at the legation door at about 1:00 in the morning…I opened the door and a dagger was

[14] Dawisha, "Intervention in the Yemen," 50.

[15] TNA, CO 1015/2150, 4. January 6, 1961, C. Johnston (Aden) to FO. It was not clear who these two individuals were. The British were the target of Arab Nationalist rhetoric as well during a 1961 Arab League meeting when Nasser boasted that he would soon have a consulate in Aden.

[16] Tony Geraghty, *Who Dares Wins: The Special Air Service, 1950 to the Falklands* (London: Arms and Armour Press, 1980), 63. Geraghty and other British historians take any opportunity to blame unrest on Soviet agent Kim Philby.

> stuck straight into my chest…My wife came out of the bedroom in her nightie and she attacked him and threw him down the stairs and he injured himself on his own dagger though he managed to escape."[17]

Italian Minister Guillet later concluded that the Egyptians had been behind this attack.[18] The fact that Radio Cairo later dubbed Qunbula a "National Hero", further corroborated the suspicions of Egyptian intervention.[19] An attack on German *chargé d'affaires* Stolz on February 8, 1962, continued the spread of rumors that Egyptian intelligence organizations were working to undermine foreign support of Imam Ahmad in preparation for his overthrow.[20] The increased presence of Egyptian advisers and school teachers in major cities throughout Yemen coupled with militant verbal attacks on Imam Ahmad via Radio Cairo were later deemed a prelude to the Egyptian participation in the 1962 coup.[21]

In a 1967 interview, Egyptian deserter Qassim al Sherif, further reinforced the British theory that Nasser had orchestrated Sallal's coup d'état in 1962 and sent Egyptian soldiers towards Yemen ahead of the revolution date:

> "The soldiers left Cairo on 19th September, 1962 and boarded a ship called "The Sudan" on 21st September (4 days before the revolution started) and told they were going to Algeria. We arrived at Hodeida on 28th September (2 days after the Revolution) and disembarked. Other ships – the Nile, al Wadi and Cleopatra – loaded with weapons and ammunition also arrived in Hodeida on the same day. The ships al Wadi, the Nile and the Sudan, each carried a full Brigade of 1,000 men. The Egyptians' expeditionary force immediately headed for Sanaa [sic] with two Brigades, while other Egyptian troops remained in Hodeida

[17] Churchill Archives Centre, Cambridge, UK, British Diplomatic Oral History Program, R. W. Bailey.

[18] TNA, CO 1015/2150, 561, February 2, 1962.

[19] TNA, CO 1015/2150, 534, February 2, 1962, C. Johnston (Aden) to FO.

[20] TNA, CO 1015/2150, 559A, February 8, 1962, C. Johnston (Aden) to FO.

[21] Clive Jones, *Britain and the Yemen Civil War*, 27.

> and took control of Manakhah…First fighting broke out on 3rd or 4th October when an agreement with the tribes was broken."[22]

Former Yemeni revolutionaries claimed that the coup was part of an Egyptian conspiracy orchestrated by Nasser's vice president Anwar Sadat and his brother-in-law the half-Egyptian half-Yemeni 'Abd al-Rahman al-Baydani who was working with Yemeni revolutionaries in Sana'a. In a 1962 interview, Baydani told an elaborate tale of acting as an intermediary between Sadat, Nasser, and the Yemeni revolutionaries, using a system of codes for secure communication. He claimed to have sent a message on September 26, 1962 to signal the start of the revolution of which he had been at the center.[23] Baydani's story seems highly unlikely, which is unsurprising considering the description of him offered by Robert Stookey, the first secretary and counselor of the US Embassy in Yemen (Ta'iz): "Baydani is an incorrigible publicity hound and prone to distort facts and some elements."[24] Seemingly having lost patience with Baydani's penchant for mischief, Nasser arranged to have him arrested during a trip to Cairo in January 1963, keeping him away from Yemeni politics for several months.[25]

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[22] Saudi Radio Mecca, February 14, 1967. (taken from the O'Brien communiqué in Imperial War Museum, Neil McLean Files. Box A) McLean would later quote additional circumstantial evidence that the Egyptians had departed for Yemen before the Revolution began. Among others, he notes that Egyptian heavy artillery and armory arrived only one day after Sallal shelled the palace. (IWM, Neil McLean Files, Box 39)

[23] James, *Nasser at War*, 58-59. This tale often includes Muhammad 'Abd al-Wahed, the Egyptian chargé in Sana'a.

[24] FRUS 1961-1963, Vol. XVIII, 119, Telegram from the Legation in Yemen to the Department of State, December 22, 1962. Since the 1960s, Baydani had been banished from both Egyptian and Yemeni politics, although he attempted a return to politics on a number of occasions. His political aspirations might explain his outlandish retrospective account of heroism and leadership during the Yemeni coup (Robert D. Burrowes, *Historical Dictionary of Yemen* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 1995), 52).

[25] Yael Vered, *Hafikhah u-milḥamah be-Teman* (Tel Aviv: Am 'oved, 1967), 100. Baydani continued to operate on the fringes of Yemeni politics during the 1960s, traveling often to Germany, Aden, Cairo, and Baghdad.

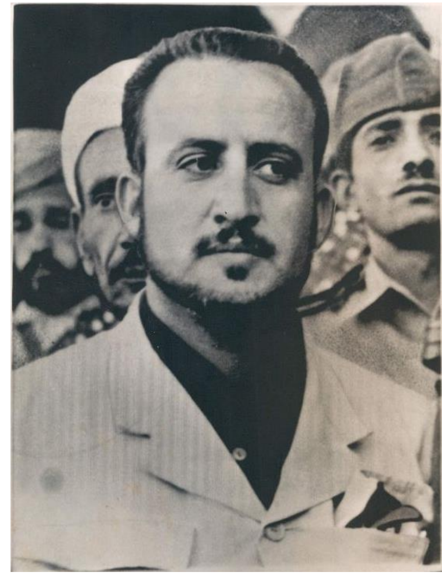



Fig. 2.1 ‘Abd al-Rahman al-Baydani (AP)



Fig. 2.2 ‘Abd al-Latif al Baghdadi (AP)

Memoirs of Egyptian officials and military personnel claim that Egypt played at most a minimal role in orchestrating events in September 1962. They argue, instead, that Egyptian troops and support arrived, purportedly, in support of a genuine national revolution in Yemen. ‘Abd al-Latif al-Baghdadi, an original member of Nasser’s Free Officer’s Movement who had broken with Nasser politically in 1964 over the intervention in Yemen, argued that war in Yemen came as a surprise. Furthermore, Nasser’s decision to send a small contingent of troops was made only after he received the false reports of al-Badr’s death and assumed there were no other viable political leaders to support.[26]

Differing from Baghdadi’s interpretation, Salah al-Din al-Hadidi, the head of Egyptian intelligence and an early critic of Nasser, claimed to have known about the revolution, but that Egypt made it their official policy not to interfere. Perhaps in an attempt to maintain the innocence of the Egyptian intelligence, Hadidi claimed that

[26] Habib, *Milaffat thawrat yuliyu,* 240-1. According to this version, Nasser sent a full platoon only fifteen days after the original coup. Baghdadi would later describe Nasser’s intervention as “100% a mistake.”

Baydani, acting at the behest of the Egyptians, waited until September 29, 1962 to arrive in Sana'a with a small contingent of Egyptian officers with a direct wireless transmitter link to Cairo.[27]

A particular point of contention between British and Egyptian version of the events was in regards to the Egyptian ship *Sudan* and the timing of its arrival in the Yemeni port of Hodeidah. According to British sources, four Egyptian ships, the *Nile, al-Wadi, Cleopatra,* and *Sudan* set sail four days prior to the coup.[28] Salah al-Din al-Hadidi claims that the *Sudan* did not set sail prior to the coup. It was waiting in the port of Suez on the night of October 2nd under "confidential orders to be equipped with everything deemed necessary by Marshal Amer." The ship set sail as soon as word was received and reached Hodeidah three days later.[29] Hadidi's version of the *Sudan* episode supports his argument that the Egyptian intelligence knew of the plans but consciously declined to intervene, allowing the Yemeni coup take its course.

British accounts are motivated by a disdain for Nasser and his Yemeni intervention while Egyptian accounts aim to absolve themselves of commandeering a nationalist revolution. In the months and years that followed, the Yemeni coup was quickly overrun by other nations, who had been establishing positions of influence in South Arabia in the years prior to the outbreak of the civil war. In less than two years, Nasser would amass 70,000 Egyptian soldiers in Yemen and Americans and Soviets would intervene with political and diplomatic capital. The massive Egyptian intervention in the later years of the civil war has clouded the debate over the origins and organizers of

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[27] Salah al-Din al-Hadidi, *Shahid 'ala Harb al-Yaman* (Cairo: Maktabat Madbūlī, 1984), 21.

[28] Duff Hart-Davis, *The War that Never Was* (London: Century, 2011), 25. This account was based on British intelligence material from the Imperial War Museum.

[29] al-Hadidi, *Shahid 'ala Harb al-Yaman*, 38.

the September coup. The massive scale of Egyptian involvement throughout the course of the civil war does not presuppose Nasser's role in planning and carrying out the coup. The Yemeni 1962 coup was, in actuality, the culmination of two decades of anti-Imam sentiments by a new generation of Yemeni intelligentsia that preceded the rise of Nasser and the Egyptian Free Officers in 1952. A few guns and perhaps some logistical training by Egyptian officers were relatively minor when compared with the historically Yemeni roots of September 1962.

The Famous Forty

In 1934, Yemen and the newly-formed state of Saudi Arabia fought a brief war over disputed border territories claimed by both countries. After Yemen's military failure and the loss of the Jizan, Najran, and 'Asir territories, Imam Yahya, who fought the Ottomans for national liberation and founded the Mutawakkilite Kingdom of Yemen in 1918, undertook a project to create a national army, thereby lessening his reliance on tribal militias in the time of war. Taking advantage of a Yemeni Treaty of Friendship with Iraq, Yahya sent students to the Military Academy in Baghdad. Abdullah al-Sallal, the first President of the Yemen Arab Republic (YAR) along with other members of this group would later serve as the core of the Free Yemeni Movement (FYM).[30]

Sallal recalls that his time in Baghdad had a great influence on the decision to be involved in revolution in Yemen:

> "We talked about Arabism and the future of the Arab struggle. And I was thinking while listening to these discussions about my country…which was ruled by despotism, in ignorance, backwardness and underdevelopment. Hope began to stir in my chest…Why don't we spread the call for progress when we return to Yemen."[31]

[30] J. Leigh Douglas, *The Free Yemeni Movement 1935-1962* (Beirut, Lebanon: The American University of Beirut, 1987), 25.

[31] Muhammad Ali Luqman and Faruq Muhammad Luqman, *Qissat al-Thawra al-Yamaniyya* (Aden: Dar Fatat al-Jazira), 82.

According to historian J. Leigh Douglas, although the FYM can be traced functionally to a few small and scattered groups, it was in reality the embodiment of a new generation of Yemeni urban intellectuals, those "who held a privileged position in Yemeni society by virtue of their relative wealth, social position and education which allowed them the time and the opportunity to sit and debate questions arising from the foreign literature they were able to obtain."[32] These young educated Yemenis saw that "no country was more in need of enlightenment than their own."[33] The group's designation as a *haraka* or "movement" connotes a diffuse intellectual force and spread of ideas rather than a tangible political organization.[34]

In addition to the main group of the FYM, several additional Yemeni opposition groups were formed. In 1935 *Hay'at al-Nidal* ("The Committee of the Struggle") met in secret to discuss Arab poetry and literature that had been formally banned from Yemen and the need for reforms to the Imam's government.[35] Paul Dresch describes *hay'at al-nidal* as the first "modernist" opposition to Imam Yahya as they were a reflection of the young generation's desire to debate the succession of the next Imam.[36] Under the same pretext, *Fatat al Fulayhi* ("The Youth of Fulayhi"), met in the al-Fulayhi mosque in Sana'a to discuss concepts of Arab nationalism. Members of this group came to be known as the *shabbab*, or young men. They formed the core of the

[32] Douglas, *The Free Yemeni Movement*, 63.

[33] O'Ballance, *The War in Yemen*, 43.

[34] J. Leigh Douglas, "The Free Yemeni Movement: 1935-1962," in *Contemporary Yemen: Politics and Historical Background*, ed. B.R. Pidham (London: Croom Helm, 1984), 34.

[35] Douglas, *The Free Yemeni Movement*, 34. Imam Yahya eventually uncovered their organization, imprisoned, and in some cases exiled their members.

[36] Paul Dresch, *Tribes, Government, and History in Yemen* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 237.

young generation's dissatisfaction with rule under the Imam.[37] In the late 1930s, *Majallat al-Hikma al-Yamaniyya* ("The Yemeni Review of Wisdom"), the only local magazine published at the time aside from Yahya's *Al-Iyman* ("The Faith"), further spread the call for reforms.[38]

In Aden, Baghdad, and Cairo, groups of Yemeni émigrés founded dissident organizations. Among the most prominent of these was the *al-Jamiyya al-Yamaniyya al-Kubra* ("The Grand Yemeni Association"), which formed in Cairo in January 1946 by Ahmad Nu'man and Muhammad al-Zubayri. The two leaders would continue to be prominent revolutionary intellectuals throughout the 1960s.[39] Yemeni émigrés were joined by several hundred young Yemeni men who traveled abroad for secondary and higher education between the years of 1947-1959. The "chain migration" from Yemen was encouraged by Yemeni family and tribal networks that had already been established in Aden and Cairo and that facilitated the mass study abroad.[40]

At the core of these numbers was the Famous Forty, a group of Yemeni students who would return to Yemen in 1962 to lead the first generation of Yemeni modernists as government officials, military officers and cabinet ministers to the new YAR.[41] Imam Ahmad, while he was still a Crown Prince in 1947, commissioned scholarships

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[37] Douglas, *The Free Yemeni Movement*, 39. Among this group was Wadi Yahya Muhammad al-Iryani, Qadi Abdullah al-Jirafi, and many others who would assume important roles in the 1948 coup.

[38] Douglas, *The Free Yemeni Movement*, 43.

[39] Douglas, *The Free Yemeni Movement*, 86.

[40] Rosser, "Education, Revolt, and Reform in Yemen," 35.

[41] Robert D. Burrowes, "The Famous Forty and their Companions: North Yemen's First-Generation Modernists and Educational Emigrants," *Middle East Journal* 59 (2005), 82. Burrowes explains that although moving abroad for employment opportunities was common for Yemenis, going abroad for educational was relatively unheard of. This cohort was even more unique in the fact that with few exception they all returned to Yemen, rather than act as a 'brain-drain' for the country.

for forty teenage Yemeni students for study abroad. This decision was monumental in that it was the first of its kind for an Imamate known for the forced isolation of local population. Following Yahya's earlier example, Ahmad understood the necessity of educating a core of leaders to modernize Yemen's army and domestic infrastructure. One of the students, Mohsin al-'Ayni, was considered a leader of the group and would rise to become the YAR's first foreign minister and four-time prime minister. Several other students would gain prominence as members of the FYM and the Yemen republic including 'Abdullah al-Kurshami, a future prime minister, 'Abdullah Juzaylan, the future deputy commander of the armed forces during the civil war and Muhammad al-Ahnumi, a future republican revolutionary officer.[42] Hassan Maki, a later member of the "Soviet-Five" and a future prime minister, was separated from the rest of group and sent to pursue a doctorate in Italy.[43] According to Robert Burrowes, the Famous Forty constituted the "first-generation modernists" of Yemen.[44]

In the 1940s, leaders of the FYM resolved, albeit reluctantly, to maintain the Imamate as it was, at the time, more legitimate than a republic. They hoped, however, to make the Imam's power decentralized through a modern administration with more power given to the tribes to govern themselves.[45] In February 1948, Abdullah Ahmad al-Wazir, a rival tribal *sayyid*, or descendent worthy of rule, of Imam Yahya's Hamid al-Din family orchestrated the assassination of Imam Yahya with the intention of seizing power. Ali Nasir al-Qarda'i and members of the Bani Hushaysh tribes killed Imam Yahya but the plan to simultaneously murder Crown Prince Ahmad in Ta'iz was

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[42] Rosser, "Education, Revolt, and Reform in Yemen," 28.

[43] Rosser, "Education, Revolt, and Reform in Yemen," 46.

[44] Burrowes, "The Famous Forty." Burrowes estimates that between one-third and one-half of all Yemeni cabinet appointments since 1967 originated from the original Famous Forty.

[45] Douglas, *The Free Yemeni Movement*, 122-139.

not carried out.[46] Jamal Jamil, the Director of Public Security and the Deputy Minister of Defence in the post-Yahya regime of al-Wazir, entered Yahya's palace with 2,800 soldiers, killing two of his remaining sons, and carrying out what was considered among the first military coups in the Middle East.[47] By the end of the month, however, the northern tribes, in alliance with the Crown Prince, looted the city of Sana'a and arrested the perpetrators.

The 1948 coup failed to maintain a lasting new government for a number of reasons. The assassination of Imam Yahya was undignified in the eyes of traditional Yemeni society, particularly when they recalled the elderly Imam's last act of diving in front of his young grandson to protect him from the barrage of bullets. Although Jamal Jamil managed to kill two of Yahya's sons, Crown Prince Ahmad escaped the hands of the conspirators and was able to gather tribal support in the Yemeni northern highlands. According to Muhammad al-Fusayyil, a veteran of Yemen's revolutions, the 1948 coup failed because the general population did not understand the concepts of "constitutionalism." The core leadership of the coup was elitist and did not engage the local population in the way that it would 14 years later.[48] The final missing element of a lasting coup was international support, of which al-Wazir received none.

Those conspirators who were not executed following the coup were incarcerated for a number of years at the Hajja prison located northwest of Sana'a. Prisoners in Hajja, and in the Middle East in general, were rarely kept in solitary confinement, often

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[46] Paul Dresch, *A History of Modern Yemen* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 56.

[47] John Hewitt, "First footsteps in Yemen, 1947," *The British-Yemeni Society* 2005, 3. Jamal Jamil was an Iraqi artillery officer assigned to the Yemeni army in Sana'a. He was the father of Ra'is Jamal Jamil, the Iraqi artillery officer wanted in Baghdad for his role in the 1940 Iraqi Golden Carpet revolution. Jamil was later executed along with other co-conspirators.

[48] Rosser, "Education, Revolt, and Reform in Yemen," 58. Al-Fusayyil considered the 1962 coup to be a popular uprising with a greater number of educated supporters.

meeting each other on a daily basis. Sallal, who was among the jailed conspirators, would later refer to the prison as "the university of Hajja" because of all the political discussions amongst the educated revolutionaries.[49] Among Sallal's reading list in the prison were a number of books on the French Revolution and Nasser's *Philosophy of the* Revolution.[50]

During the 1950s, the FYM continued to operate through its international branches of the Yemeni Union, drawing on the support of the diaspora Yemeni population. For example, Muhammad Abd al-Salih al-Shurjabi founded the Yemeni Young Men's Association in Aden and later published the *Saba* newspaper, a publication focused on anti-Imam rhetoric.[51] Ahmad, Muhammad Nu'man's son and Zubayri published a popular pamphlet "Matalib al-Sha'b" or "The Demands of the People":

> "Poverty has driven hundreds of thousands abroad. The rulers of the country have been evil, false, and ignorant…No-one is left in towns and villages. All live in fear of robbery, bloodshed and rebellion. Foreign powers hope to occupy, colonise and enslave the Yemen, seeing that the Yemenis have no government…"[52]

In 1952, Zubayri, who had been in exile in Pakistan since the 1948 coup, moved to Cairo where he founded a branch of the Aden-based Yemen Union along with student members of the Famous Forty.[53] Zubayri used members of the student group, included

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[49] Douglas, *The Free Yemeni Movement*, 162. The prison was located in the Qahera Fortrass (Qula'at al Qahera) dating from the 11th Century. The fortress had been used for centuries to house the Imam's hostages from rebel tribes who were housed in its large underground prisons.

[50] Ali Abdel Rahman Rahmy, *The Egyptian Policy in the Arab World: Intervention in Yemen 1962-1967 Case Study* (Washington DC: University Press of American, 1983), 84. According to Sallal's recollections, he returned to the army after his time in prison with the objective to remove all Imams, including al-Badr.

[51] Douglas, *The Free Yemeni Movement*, 171.

[52] Dresch, *Modern Yemen*, 79. The pamphlet was first printed in Aden. Dresch argues that Ahmad Nu'man, who was Muhammad Nu'man's son likely wrote the actual pamphlet.

[53] Rosser, "Education, Revolt, and Reform in Yemen," 37.

al-‘Ayni, as couriers to Yemen to deliver Zubayri’s letters to local FYM supporters.[54] Nu’man would join the group in 1955 after his release from the Imam’s prison in Hajja.

In 1955, another coup was attempted against Imam Ahmad, averted only by Ahmad’s heroic actions. On April 4, 1955 when the cars arrived for the imprisoned Imam and his family, Ahmad marched from the entrance of the Palace carrying a gun in one hand and a sword in the other. He quickly regained the support of his personal bodyguards, commandeered three military cars and took 80,000 riyals (12,000 pounds sterling) out of the treasury. With these resources in hand, Ahmad managed to rally supporters and reestablish power.[55]

Although both the 1948 and 1955 attempts to overthrown Imam Ahmad failed, the foundation of the Free Yemeni Movement would remain at the core of the 1962 coup. The most influential contingent of the Yemeni Union branches was located in Cairo, which constituted the majority of Yemenis studying abroad. Between 1958 and 1961, while Imam Ahmad was a member of the United Arab Republic (UAR) with Egypt, Syria, and Yemen, Nasser curtailed support for the anti-Imam Yemeni Union in Cairo. Following the breakup of the union and Nasser’s disenchantment with Ahmad, Nasser allowed them to prepare for the September 1962 coup from Egyptian territory. The Cairo and Aden branches of the Yemeni Union worked with dissident elements of domestic military and political circles to prepare for the nationalist coup in Yemen. The most obvious element of cooperation, at least with Baydani, was through Egyptian media. On May 12, 1962, Baydani broadcast a speech calling for social justice and economic development in Yemen entitled “Blueprint for a Yemeni Republic”. In July and August, he gave a series of talks on Cairo radio entitled “The Secrets of Yemen”.

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[54] Rosser, “Education, Revolt, and Reform in Yemen,” 43.

[55] Douglas, *The Free Yemeni Movement*, 190.

The popular Egyptian magazine *Ruz al Youssef* published a series of Baydani's anti-Imam articles in the month before the revolution.[56] While Baydani and other Free Yemenis made use of Egyptian media, the aid was limited for the most part to broadcast and print.

For those who questioned the extent of Nasser's involvement in orchestrating the coup in Yemen, perhaps it is necessary to reconsider this line of reasoning. The FYM laid the foundations of September 1962 well before Nasser came to power, and it was primarily responsible for its own nationalist revolution. According to *Al Thawra*, the 1962 revolution was a third stage of a process that began in 1948 and continued in 1955.[57] Egyptian intervention in the Yemeni coup was only one part of a broader international involvement in South Arabia that began in the 1950s.

[56] Rahmy, *Egyptian Policy*, 90.

[57] "The real Yemeni revolution and history," Ahmad Jaaber, *Al Thawra* (December 31, 1962). Copies of *Al Thawra*, an official government-funded newspaper, can be found in the Yemeni Presidential compound. At least according to the archivist's account, other copies of Yemeni newspapers were destroyed during the siege of Sana'a in 1968.

Al-Badr and the Soviets

While the FYM was working to undermine Imam Ahmad's authority, Soviet economic delegations were cultivating a close relationship with Crown Prince al-Badr. Al-Badr was a man of great dreams living in a world of Yemeni poverty, lack of modern infrastructure, and international political irrelevance. Desperate to advance his own political interests and his vision for a modern Yemeni state, al-Badr was inclined to ally with any nation or organization that promised great things for his country. Predictably, al-Badr became a self-declared Nasserite, having been corralled by the ideological rhetoric of Arab nationalism and Nasser's personality and charisma. When the Soviets approached him with promises of economic development, he was an enthusiastic recipient.[58]

Even his own family members harbored negative opinions of al-Badr's royal qualities and his designation as Crown Prince. His cousin Abdullah ibn al-Hussein regarded al-Badr as "dissolute, incompetent, and gullible."[59] Al-Badr's character inequities were overshadowed only by his display of pomp and hubris. V. A. Galkin, a Soviet doctor practicing in Yemen in 1961 described a scene in Sana'a of a large retinue of Yemeni soldiers on horseback followed by tanks in honor of Prince al-Badr, whom he describes as "tall, surrounded by a dense ring of bodyguards dressed in blue who did not step aside even for one minute."[60]

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[58] According to British observers, in addition to economic aid, al-Badr also adopted a drinking problem, perhaps over the course of his Eastern European excursions (Stephen Dorril, *MI6: Inside the Covert World of Her Majesty's Secret Intelligence Service* (New York: The Free Press, 2000), 678).

[59] Jones, *Britain and the Yemen Civil War*, 24. Al-Badr's uncle Prince Hassan believed as well that his nephew was unfit to rule as Imam.

[60] Vsevolod Aleksandrovich Galkin, *V Ĭemene; zapiski sovetskogo vracha* (*In Yemen: A Soviet Doctor's Notes*) (Moscow: Oriental Literature Publishing House, 1963), 68. Galkin was a Soviet doctor serving in Sana'a, Hodeidah, and other Yemeni villages. He documents his interactions with Yemeni patients, daily routine, and the details of each city or village.



Fig. 2.3 Al-Badr arriving to oil concession ceremony with pomp and lavish retinue.[61]

Soviet strategy in Yemen during the 1950s was small-scale, long-term, and low-risk. In 1955, the USSR signed a Treaty of Friendship with Yemen. Imam Ahmad received enough small arms to encourage more hostile anti-British action, but not enough to start a large-scale war that would drag Soviets into the conflict. Moscow's logic in this agreement was that the continued use of Soviet weapons would increase Yemen's dependence on Soviet technicians, spare parts, and additional shipments for the foreseeable future. In supplying Yemen's army, the Soviets encouraged Ahmad to attack the British, a position that he likely would have taken regardless. There was little chance for a British victory and a high likelihood that Yemeni attacks would weaken the British position in Arabia.[62]

All translations are those of the author, unless otherwise indicated.

[61] Jack Crichton and E. J. Anderson, *The Middle East Connection (Yemen)* (Bloomington: Author House, 2003).

[62] Stephen Page, *The Soviet Union and the Yemens: Influence in Asymmetrical Relationships* (New York: Praeger Special Studies, 1985), 4. Page suggests that by the end of 1961, Imam Ahmad was no longer the ideal Soviet third world leader, because he broke with Nasser, made

Furthermore, Moscow envisioned Yemen as a staging post for Soviet expansion into Arabian Peninsula at the expense of Western interests.[63] Vladimir Sakharov, a Soviet diplomat to the YAR who defected to the US in 1971, explained that Moscow had no diplomatic relations with Saudi Arabia or any of the other oil sheikhdoms at the time. North Yemen, and South Arabia more generally, was envisioned as s Soviet entry point into both the Arabian Peninsula and the Red Sea.[64]

In 1956, as per the terms of the Yemeni-Soviet trade agreement, planned projects were launched for cement, leather, juice, and metal packaging factories, a depot for oil storage, and a new port in Hodeidah. Soviet trade delegations in January and March of that year oversaw the implementation of these projects.[65] In addition, a credit of 13.5 million rubles was granted to Yemen. In July 1956, al-Badr led a well-publicized Yemeni delegation of twelve Yemeni ministers to visit Moscow and formalize military and economic cooperation.[66] Al-Badr received "permission" from his father to embark on a world tour to the People's Republic of China (PRC), the USSR and other Eastern

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an alliance with Chinese, accepted of economic aid from the US, and ceased attacks on British Aden. Page describes the September 1962 coup as the revitalization of Soviet-friendly Yemeni leaders.

[63] Adeed Dawisha, "The Soviet Union in the Arab World: The Limits to Superpower Influence," in *The Soviet Union in the Middle East: Policies and Perspectives*, ed. Adeed Dawisha and Karen Dawisha (London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1982), 16.

[64] Vladimir Sakharov and Umberto Tosi, *High Treason* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1980), 147-149.

[65] Charles B. McLane, *Soviet-Middle East Relations* (London: Central Asian Research Centre, 1973), 113.

[66] AVPRF, Fond 585, Opis 5, Papka 4, Dela 6, March 1962 – Soviet Delegation to Yemen Report. The delegation included Al-Badr who was the Minister of Defense and Commander in Chief of Armaments and Strength), Hassan bin Ibrahim (Foreign Minister), 'Abd al-Rahman al-Sayigi (Minister of Internal Affairs), Seif al Islam Abduh Rahman (Minister of Health), Abduh Rahman Abu Taaleb (Minister Economics and Trade), Muhammad 'Abd al-Amuv (Minister of Education), Prince Hassan ibn Ali (Minister of Social Labor and Manufacturing), Sheikh Muhammad Ali Osman (Finance Minister), Zeid Akabat (Minister of Agricultural Economy), Abdel Qader Abdullah (Postal Minister), Abdullah al Hadjari (Minister of Communications), Abdullah Abdel Karim (Minister of State), Qadi Nasser al Zuravi (Minister of Land).

European countries only after he proved his worthiness by rallying tribal allies following the 1955 coup.[67]

The first Russian mission opened in Ta'iz in January 1958 and the Soviet ambassador to the UAR served as *chargé d'affaires* for Yemen as well. In response, a Yemeni delegation visited USSR in 1959.[68] Following their meeting, the Chinese sent engineers and laborers to build roads in Yemen, while the Soviets sent specialists to begin work on the port in Hodeidah.[69] In 1957 there were only 50 Soviet and Chinese specialists in Yemen. By 1959 there were 600 Chinese and several hundred Russians and by 1960 there were over 1,100 Chinese laborers working on Yemeni roads.[70] The Hodeidah port, named Port Ahmad, required 300,000 tons of modern construction material for the port and facilities to create the capacity for storing 9,000 tons of oil. The area around the port was to be equipped with electricity, mechanized factories, cars, Soviet technicians and specialists. In addition, the Yemenis were granted $2 million credit to facilitate these projects.[71] Soviet media covering the arrival of tractors, excavators, and other heavy machinery to the port construction site noted that: "While working together, the Soviet-Yemeni friendship widened, fraternal cooperation

[67] Fred Halliday, *Arabia Without Sultans* (London: Saqi Books, 2002), 97.

[68] RGANI, Fond 5, Opis 30, Dela 452, List 30-38, June 1964. In February 1961 the Yemenis would open their own mission in Moscow staffed by a Yemeni charge d'affaires.

[69] GARF Fond 4459, Opis 24, Dela 2125, File 5, November 1, 1959, TASS-Peking.

[70] Page, Stephen, *The USSR and Arabia: The development of Soviet policies and attitudes towards the countries of the Arabian peninsula 1955-1970* (London: The Central Asian Research Centre, 1971), 49. There was a recurrent joke about Imam Ahmad and the Chinese road builders. Evidently, when Chinese engineers approached Imam Ahmad for payment, he claimed to be displeased with the road, refusing to pay and telling the Chinese to take the road back!

[71] RGANI, Fond 5, Opis 30, Dela 452, List 30-38, June 1964. Port Ahmad was named after Imam Ahmad who served as monarch of Yemen from 1948 through his death in 1962.

is growing, and they have achieved together a new brightness in the completion of Port Ahmad – a port of peace and friendship."[72]

British intelligence reports in 1961 observed: "It is widely said that the Soviet purpose in providing tanks and guns, which are beyond the Yemeni capacity to operate, is to form a stockpile that could be manned in time of war by Egyptians and Russians." Furthermore, British observers claimed that Soviets were allowed to build meteorological stations in Hodeidah, whereas the Americans were rejected on supposedly religious grounds, supposed further evidence that Yemen was the next target of Soviet machinations. British alarmists were worried that their colony in Aden was the next target, followed by Somalia, where the Chinese already had a charges d'affaire.[73]

The Soviets had given their support to Ahmad despite his "feudal" country and absolute theocracy. His personal character trait of frugality and good intentions were exemplified by the state of his palace which the Soviets deemed "modest" and his sincere efforts to improve public health. The real target for Soviet foreign policy, however, was al-Badr, who preferred a more rapid Soviet-supported modernism.[74] In the spring of 1962, al-Badr organized another trade delegation to Moscow, this time to

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[72] GARF, Fond 4459, Opis 24, Dela 2555, File 7, April 1, 1961, TASS-Ahmad and AVPRF, Fond 585, Opis 5, Papka 4, Dela 7, January 1962. It is interesting to note, as well, that Saudi Arabia was cultivating its own commercial relationship with Imam's Ahmad's regime. In January 1962, a Saudi shipping company signed an agreement with the Yemeni government to take on any number of steamer passengers heading to Saudi Arabia, as long as that steamer could deliver passengers to Mocha. An advertisement was placed in Mocha offering this route to Saudi Arabia via the port of Mocha. The Soviet mission to Yemen admitted that everyone who has seen the difficulties of travel to Saudi Arabia by way of land, can understand the logic of sea transport

[73] TNA, Soviet Bloc Activities in Yemen, FO 371/156939/BM 1016/2, February 1961. The Chinese mission was stationed in Mogadishu. British sources also criticized the American "Richards Mission" in 1957 as being insufficient to keep Yemen neutral with additional promises of aid.

[74] Page, *The USSR and Arabia*, 48.

accept a Russian agreement to use Yemen as a transit point for oil shipments to Africa.[75] Al-Badr's affinity for the Soviets was apparent during a speech that he gave in June 1962 at the opening ceremony of the Ahmad Port in Hodeidah, less than four months before the start of the Yemeni revolution. He opened with lengthy and poetic verses about the triumph of the Yemen people in the construction of the port. Amidst this long oration, he dedicated several elaborate sentences of praise and gratitude to the Soviet Union for their aid in funding and constructing the port: "We and the Soviet People – Brothers, you are the most true and faithful of our friends… Many thanks to the Soviet government for their generous help to Yemen."[76] Several pages of text later, al-Badr returned to the subject of the Soviet-Yemeni cooperation in greater detail:

> "I am happy to be among you on behalf of his Majesty the King…at the opening of port Ahmad. This immortal project was until recent times a dream of many and it seems a utopia far from implementation…and here this port that speaks for itself, here this high building ascends to the heaven, and here is mastery and mechanism. This great work continued day and night. Colossal efforts given by our Yemeni sons and brothers in a joint operation with our Russian friends cause us great respect and wonder. I send you a thousand welcomes and respect. Port Ahmad is the first of projects that are needed to carry out the service for the benefit of our own country…thank our dear friends, to share in the opening of our first grand project…"[77]

Al-Badr's Port Ahmad speech praised Yemeni-Soviet cooperation and viewed the current project as part of a long-term relationship between the two countries. In a speech eulogizing his father, the late Imam Ahmad on September 21, 1962, al-Badr even claimed that his father's dying wish was to "adopt socialist economic, military,

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[75] IWM, Neil McLean Files, Box 20, Green Envelope.

[76] GARF, Fond 4459, Opis 24, Dela 2555, File 24-25, April 7, 1961.

[77] AVPRF, Fond 585, Opis 5, Papka 4, Dela 62, June 14, 1962. The majority of al-Badr's speech consisted of religious rhetoric and talk of creating a new and more socialist Yemeni society. Port Ahmad was seen as the first of many municipal projects in his new Yemeni society.

and political standards for the people."[78] Khrushchev echoed al-Badr's sentiment and described Ahmad in his condolences as having "made a worthy contribution to the cause of consolidating the political and economic independence of Yemen."[79]

Armin Meyer, the former American ambassador to Iran, best described the plight of al-Badr, whom he referred to as the "red prince": "He had been impatient with West, had gone to Moscow, been wined and dined, and delightedly embarked on arms procurement road with Soviets. Months later, when he was murdered by recipients [of] those arms, Soviets shed no tears but cynically and quickly recognized his successors."[80] David Holden, the Middle East correspondent for *The Guardian* described al-Badr in equally unflattering terms: "Al-Badr was, in fact, what is usually described as a wooly-minded liberal, sincerely anxious to reform his country without much idea of how to set about it or what passions reform might release. He was full of good intentions which ultimately, and appropriately, paved the way to his downfall."[81]

[78] AVPRF, Fond 585, Opis 14, Papka 7, Dela 10, File 1, September 21, 1962, "The New Imam's Reforms".

[79] Page, *The USSR and Arabia*, 64. Despite Nasser's call in December 1961 for revolution in Yemen, the Soviets continued to remain friendly to Ahmad until his death in September.

[80] Department of State, Central Files, DEF 19-8 US-Iran, Telegram From the Embassy in Iran to the Department of State, July 11, 1966. Evidently Meyer's interest in Yemen peaked around October 1962 and he never discovered that al-Badr was not actually killed.

[81] David Holden, *Farewell to Arabia* (New York: Walker and Company, 1966), 89.

Al-Badr and Nasser

Anti-Ahmad plots were not limited to the fringe members of tribal opposition or the FYM, but included Al-Badr himself. [82] According to al-Badr's account, he was recruited by Nasser to overthrow the leadership of his own father and establish an Egyptian hub on the Arabian Peninsula. [83]

Al-Badr and Nasser first met in 1954 during a two-month visit to Cairo after which Nasser announced a large aid program for Yemen. During a subsequent trip to Cairo in 1955, al-Badr met with the local branch of the Yemen Union, developing a contingent of supporters among the FYM.[84] During his third visit to Cairo to sign the Jeddah Defense Pact with Egypt in 1956, al-Badr promoted 13 Yemeni cadets from the Egyptian military school ordering to first lieutenants. Following graduation several months later, the newly promoted cadets set out for Yemen and were greeted personally by al-Badr at the Hodeidah port. 'Abd al-Latif Dayfallah, a future Yemeni prime minister and one of the thirteen returning, remarked:

> "The thirteen Yemeni officers---by the way the same number as the Egyptian Free Officers---was quickly being molded into the Egyptian model. The Egyptian Free Officers movement which overthrew the monarchy in Egypt was something we emulated."[85]

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[82] Clive Jones, *Britain and the Yemen Civil War 1962-1965.* Sussex Academic Press: Brighton, 2004, 33.

[83] Xan Fielding, *One Man in His Time: The Life of Lieutenant-Colonel NLD ('Billy') McLean, DSP* (Macmillan: London, 1990), 136. Al-Badr confided this to McLean. Although this plan was aborted, al-Badr did develop a relationship with the Soviets and thereby facilitated the building of the Hodeidah port as a major Yemeni port independent from Aden. Ironically, it was this very port which was now being used as a base for Egyptian troops to supply troops fighting al-Badr and his royalist supporters

[84] Rosser, "Education, Revolt, and Reform in Yemen," 45.

[85] Rosser, "Education, Revolt, and Reform in Yemen," 49.

Dayfallah and ‘Abdullah Juzaylan, who was also one of the thirteen, were instrumental in forming the Yemeni Free Officer movement in 1960. The group of young officers would be at the core of the September 1962 overthrow of the Imam.[86]

In a long conversation with British MP and mercenary Neil McLean during the Yemeni Civil War, al-Badr confessed to the extent that his naiveté, trustworthiness, and hubris almost caused him to sacrifice his father and the independence of his country for empty promises. During al-Badr’s many trips to Cairo, Nasser had been cultivating him as a protégé, hoping to secure a Nasserist ally in South Arabia.

After Yemen officially joined the United Arab Republic (UAR) in 1958 al-Badr made a trip to Damascus to meet with Tito, Nasser, Syrian President Shukri al-Quwatli, and a cohort of Egyptian officials including Ali Sabri, Hakim Amer, Anwar Sadat, among others to discuss the planning of a revolution against his father Imam Ahmad. Nasser explained that he envisioned turning Yemen into a base for Arab nationalism and anti-imperialism in Arabia. He promised to send al-Badr two cases of pistols, Egyptian £25,000 (around $42,500), and an additional £50,000 sterling after completion.

[86] Rosser, “Education, Revolt, and Reform in Yemen,” 53.


[87]

Fig. 2.4 Presidents Gamal Abdel Nasser and Shukri al-Quwatli receiving Yemeni Crown Prince Mohammad Badr in Damascus in February 1958, in celebration of the United Arab Republic (UAR) formation.

Later that year, Nasser called al-Badr on the private wireless transmitter that Nasser had installed in al-Badr's palace in Sana'a, and instructed him to meet 'Abd al-Salam 'Arif, the Iraqi Arab nationalist leader and Nasser supporter in Baghdad for further instructions. In a series of comical episodes, Iraqi Prime Minister 'Abd al-Karim Qasim incessantly interrupted al-Badr's meetings with 'Arif, refusing to leave them alone for even five minutes, perhaps fearing that they were conniving against his own rule. 'Arif's final attempt at passing a letter to al-Badr was intercepted personally by Qasim, punctuating an unproductive visit to Baghdad.[88]

[87] www.syrianhistory.com

[88] Imperial War Museum (IWM), Neil McLean Files, Box 20, Green Envelope.

The next year in 1959, al-Badr was again called to Alexandria, where he was spirited off in a lengthy car ride to an isolated house near the town of Borg el-Arab.[89] Al-Badr arrived in time to see off a group of men who Nasser explained were Saudi dissidents looking to overthrow King Saud. In what was no doubt a planned charade, Nasser led al-Badr to believe that he had plans for overthrowing the Saudi royal family and perhaps restoring the honor and land that the Yemenis had lost in 1934. Al-Badr and Nasser then returned to Cairo to meet with leaders of the Algerian FLN Ferhat Abbas and Benyoucef Benkhedda who explained the role envisioned for Algerian commandoes and saboteurs. The plot thickened when Soviet naval agents proposed sending a fleet to Hodeidah to block off any attempts at American or British intervention during the Yemeni revolution.[90]

According to Neil McLean, Nasser came to an agreement with the Algerian FLN to send volunteers to Yemen and organize terrorist activities against Aden through extensive training camps in Egypt. In the first phase of his plan, he would occupy Yemen and set up government ready to become a member in the United Arab Republic.[91] Then, as part of the second phase, he would undermine Saudi monarchs and arm opposition parties in Aden and Saudi Arabia thereby fomenting an Arab Socialist revolution on the Arabian Peninsula. For the third and final phase, Egypt would occupy the Persian Gulf, thus gaining access to oil money. The Russians and

[89] Anwar al-Sadat's presidential resort was located in Borg el-Arab as well. The town would become an industrial city in later decades.

[90] *ibid*. When al-Badr tried to convince his father of the "benign" intentions for hosting a Soviet naval fleet in Hodeidah, Ahmad refused to grant permission.

[91] Jonathan Walker argues that the Yemen civil war cannot be separated from the anti-British insurgency in South Arabia. Nasser's sponsorship of the revolution in North and South Yemen was a testament to his plans of uniting the two halves of Yemen and incorporating the country as a member of the UAR. (Jonathan Walker, *Aden Insurgency: The Savage War in South Arabia, 1962-67* (Spellmount: Staplehurst, 2005).

Chinese had purportedly approved this plan as it suited their own idea of weakening Arab-Western ties.[92] Portions of this version were later corroborated in October 1962 by a wounded Egyptian paratrooper who had been told by Nasser that they were going to Yemen to fight the British in Aden.[93]

At the urging of al-Badr, Imam Ahmad's Italian doctors declared him incapacitated because of a morphine drug addiction.[94] From April-August 1959, the ailing Imam flew to Rome for medical treatment, leaving his son al-Badr in charge. Al-Badr invited Egyptian advisers and technicians to the country[95] and made promises of a substantial pay raise to army officials. These promises precipitated a political crisis once the Yemeni officers realized that al-Badr did not have sufficient funds in his possession to meet these promises. Ahmad flew back and ordered the withdrawal of all Egyptian advisers, fearing that they had orchestrated a coup against al-Badr in his absence. He called Ahmad Abu-Zeid, the Egyptian Ambassador to Yemen, and warned him that unless the Egyptians ceased their plotting against him, he would forcibly remove Egyptians from the country permanently, as his father Imam Yahya had done before him. To punctuate the statement, during a face-to-face meeting with Abu-Zeid, Ahmad tore up the civil-air agreement recently signed between the two countries.[96] He also tried to secure the repayment of bribes given by al-Badr to the tribes, but managed only

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[92] IWM, Neil McLean Files, Box 6. This version was based on Imam Al-Badr's testimony and was confirmed by other Royalists as well.

[93] IWM, Neil McLean Files, Box 4.

[94] FRUS 1958-1960, Vol. XII, 370, Editorial Note, April 1959. Al-Badr was deemed to have been very unpopular with the Yemeni tribes. The US believed in addition that the Soviets were unpopular with the Yemeni people as a consequence of Nasser's anti-communist campaign.

[95] Page, *The USSR and Arabia*, 48.

[96] IWM, Neil McLean Files. Box 20. Green Envelope.

to further alienate his tribal alliance, who had become more amenable to the tenets of the FYM.

The remaining years of Ahmad's life were punctuated by multiple unsuccessful attempts to assassinate him during which the Imam had managed during the last year of his life to make enemies of both local tribes and Gamal Abdel Nasser, a combination that would be disastrous for his unprepared Crown Prince.[97] Making matters worse for al-Badr, following his failed attempt at reform and based on suspicious evidence of al-Badr's dealings with the Soviets, Ahmad essentially grounded his son and refused to grant him permission for international travel.

In late 1961, al-Badr again spoke with Nasser, explaining that he was grounded, monitored by his father's confidants, and not at liberty to coordinate the revolution. Nasser responded that he would "take care of it" and arranged for Chinese laborers to ship unmarked boxes of guns and explosives disguised as construction equipment for one of the road building projects. In the spring of 1962, the Egyptians prematurely spread a rumor that a plot against the Yemeni Imam was impending. Nasser sent an urgent telegram to al-Badr asking him to kill his father Ahmad. In way over his head, al-Badr finally confessed the details of the intrigue to his father, who forgave him, but instructed him to leave his relationship with Egypt behind. Instead, he should invest his energies into improving Yemeni relations with Saudi Arabia and Jordan and perhaps join the Pact of Ta'if recently signed between the two kings. Several weeks prior to his Imam Ahmad's death, al-Badr did, in fact, lead a Yemeni delegation to Saudi Arabia to negotiate Yemen's entry into the Ta'if Pact. In the meanwhile, Ahmad expelled the Egyptian ambassador, leaving only the Egyptian diplomat Muhammad

[97] David Holden, *Farewell to Arabia* (New York: Walker and Company, 1966), 94. In the last twelve months of his reign, there were at least seven attempts on Ahmad's life. On one occasion in March 1962, he was found lying on the floor with four bullets in his body.

‘Abd al-Wahad behind. On the day of his father’s death, al-Badr received an ultimatum from Nasser and a personal visit from ‘Abd al-Wahab demanding an immediate union with Egypt. Before al-Badr had time to consider his options, however, his palace was being shelled and his time for naiveté had expired.[98]

According to Ali ‘Abd al-Rahman Rahmy, an Egyptian officer who served in the Yemeni Civil War, “In Cairo, al-Badr was attracted by Nasser, to a point where he was convinced he had Nasser’s personal friendship…and wished to emulate the Egyptian leader as much as possible.”[99] Aden High Commissioner Kennedy Trevaskis remarked in 1961 that al-Badr was seen by both British colonial officials and Zaydi tribal authorities as a protégé of Nasser.[100]

Al-Badr developed an open diplomatic policy of what he referred to as “positive neutrality”, or as Rahmy explained it, “a modernist on friendly terms with Russia.” [101] Prior to September 1962, it was apparent to any observer, that Imam Ahmad’s son, Crown Prince al-Badr was sympathetic to both Soviet machinations and Nasser’s Arab nationalist plans in Yemen. From the perspective of the Soviet Union, al-Badr was an Arabian leader who expressed enthusiasm for Soviet construction and development efforts and had functionally granted them the keys to the Red Sea through the port of Hodeidah. Given the potential and actual benefits of a closer relationship with the Yemeni royal family, it mattered little whether al-Badr was a communist, a capitalist, or an autocratic dictator. From the vantage point of the Soviet Union on the Arabian Peninsula, economic and political strategy was more significant than ideology in

[98] *ibid.*

[99] Rahmy, *The Egyptian Policy in the Arab World,* 59.

[100] Bodleian Library: Oxford University, Papers of Sir Kennedy Trevaskis, MSS.Brit Emp. S 367,5/14, File 65, April 20, 1961.

[101] Rahmy, *The Egyptian Policy in the Arab World,* 59.

determining their foreign policy. Nasser viewed al-Badr as a naive and spineless ruler who could be cajoled into supporting even the most outlandish of his Arab nationalist schemes. Al-Badr himself was hubristic and trusting as was evident from his confession of globetrotting and plotting at the behest of Nasser's Arab nationalist vision. While one might add the characteristic of 'fanciful story-teller' to his repertoire, there is no denying that both the Soviets and the Egyptian were tempted by the malleability of al-Badr's leadership in Yemen. Their eventual support of Sallal and the YAR, however, was mainly a product of circumstances in the days following the outbreak of the Yemeni revolution in September 1962, rather than a preordained plot to overthrow both Imam Ahmad and al-Badr, as will be detailed in the next chapter.

The US Attempt to "Locate" Yemen

At the same time that the Soviets were investing economic and political capital in Crown Prince al-Badr, their American counterparts were investing political efforts in their alliance with Saudi Arabia, while top decision-makers could scarcely find Yemen on a map. President Dwight Eisenhower's Middle East policy, known as the Eisenhower Doctrine, supported and united the conservative Arab regimes of Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, and Saudi Arabia, placing them as an ideological counter to "Nasserism".[102] By June 1957, Eisenhower succeeded in polarizing the Arab world and creating a "royalist axis" of conservative regimes that were willing to counter and criticize Egypt and Syria.[103] The 1958 coup in Iraq and the US military intervention in Lebanon conversely discredited US intentions in the Middle East and strengthened Nasser as the anti-imperialist. After abandoning the failed Eisenhower Doctrine in

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[102] Yaqub, Salim, *Containing Arab nationalism : the Eisenhower doctrine and the Middle East* (Chapel Hill : University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 145. According to John S. Badeau, the US ambassador to Egypt during the Kennedy administration, there was a lesser degree of involvement with the revolutionary states of Egypt, Syria, and Iraq.

[103] Yaqub, *Containing Arab Nationalism,* 142

1958, the administration decided to seek political accommodation with the Nasserist movement. Toward the end of the Eisenhower presidency, Soviet-Egyptian tensions arose over Nasser's policies targeting domestic communist parties, presenting an opening in US-Egyptian relations.[104] Upon entering office in 1961, Kennedy was therefore inclined to consider not only US obligations towards Saudi Arabia, but a continuing effort to court Nasser's friendship. The importance of oil exports from the Gulf and the stability of the Saudi Arabian government lent an added level of importance to every policy decision made in the region.[105] The US had no comparable strategic interests in Yemen.[106] Prior to the civil war, relatively few Foreign Service officers and Arabic speakers had served in Yemen.[107]

The following demonstrative episode occurred during a meeting between Chester L. Cooper, the liaison officer to National Security Council staff from Central Intelligence Agency, Allen Dulles, the director of Central Intelligence, and William Putnam "Bill" Bundy, a member of the CIA and Kennedy's foreign affairs advisor, best illustrates the importance, or lack thereof, of Yemen in the eyes of US officials:

> "When Bundy and I were discussing the next day's NSC meeting, we were interrupted by an unexpected visitor…
> Dulles's secretary came in to say that the head of the Middle East Division was calling. 'He says it's urgent." Allen reached for the phone. I crossed my fingers. Bill rolled his eyes.
> 'Yemen?' Dulles asked. "Who's he?...Oh. Is it really important?...Well, send him up." And up he came…
> "Well?" Dulles stared at the obviously frightened analyst. 'Yemen?' he asked again. **'What's the Yemen? ... A country? ... Never heard of it. Where is it?'**

[104] Yaqub, *Containing Arab Nationalism,* 270

[105] Badeau, John S. *The Middle East Remembered* (Washington, DC: The Middle East Institute, 1983), 201.

[106] Parker T. Hart, *Saudi Arabia and the United States: Birth of a Security Partnership* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), 117.

[107] Hart, *Saudi Arabia and the United States,* 144.

> The expert pointed with a shaking finger to a small speck on the edge of the Red Sea. 'There, Mr. Dulles.'
> 'I can't see it. But what's happening there that's so important?'
> **'It's the Imam sir.'**
> **'Imam? Never heard of that either.'**
> 'It's a person, sir. A religious person. He's the head of the government – the imam of Yemen.'
> Dulles's eyes were wandering. He looked first at Bundy, who shrugged. Then at me, who was trying to keep a straight face. Then at his watch.
> 'All right. What about him?'
> 'He's leaving the country, sir. The first this has ever happened – the imam leaving Yemen. There may be a coup.'
> 'Where's he going? Moscow? Beijing?'
> 'No, sir. He's going to Switzerland. Zurich.'
> 'Very nice. A holiday?'
> 'No, Mr. Dulles. He's going to see a doctor. A specialist.'
> Dulles suddenly became interested. 'Oh, why?'
> 'He has syphilis, sir.'
> 'Well," sighed Dulles, 'you've finally told me something that will interest members of the NSC. Thank you. Good night.'[108]

Yemen was barely on the radar of US foreign relations in the beginning of the 1960s. In fact, even in November 14, 1962, during a meeting regarding the Yemeni Civil War, British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan recorded in his diary that President Kennedy had said, "I don't even know where [Yemen] is".[109] The ignorance of world leaders and what they do not know, is as important as what they claim *to* know when it comes to decision-making.

Despite the relative obscurity of Yemen in American foreign policy circles, there was an American presence in Yemen prior to the Yemeni coup, albeit through the operations of private oil companies. The extent of Soviet investment in the Yemeni port of Hodeidah and their developing relationship with al-Badr set off a flurry of activity focused primarily on understanding Soviet plans for the Arabian Peninsula. During the 1950s, American diplomatic officials had virtually no presence in Yemen

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[108] Chester L. Cooper, *In the Shadows of History: Fifty Years Behind the Scenes of Cold War Diplomacy* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2005), 182. (The emphasis was my own)

[109] Robin Bidwell, *The Two Yemens* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1983), 20.

under the rule of Imam Ahmad, who prided himself on limiting the penetration of foreign powers in his country.

The first significant contacts with the Yemeni royal family were made in December 1955 by the Yemen Development Corporation (YDC), a small oil exploration company formed in cooperation with the CIA for the express reason of infiltrating North Yemen. At the core of the YDC were veteran Texas oilman John Alston Crichton, a former US intelligence officer with the Office of Strategic Services during WWII, Walter S. Gabler, a Washington DC investment banker consultant, and George Wadsworth, US ambassador to Saudi Arab and Yemen. Gabler, who had previously negotiated American oil concessions in Egypt in 1951, raised $20 million to purchase oil and mineral exploration rights from Imam Ahmad.[110] Aside from this agreement with the YDC, a German oil company stationed in the country's Tihama costal region, was the only other foreign entity to have secured exploration rights in Yemen. In a subsequent meeting with Imam Ahmad, Ambassador Wadsworth noted that Ahmad assumed this agreement would lead to further agreements for economic cooperation between the two countries, specifically in regards to expanded road networks and privately financed factory projects. Ahmad threatened to otherwise accept the Soviet overtures of economic assistance.[111]

Crichton, later explained that the company had the explicit support of the State Department, who expressed a sincere interest in American commercial activity in Yemen to counter the rising Soviet interests in Arabia. In November 1955, the YDC signed a thirty year agreement with Imam Ahmad giving him a fifty percent stake in an

[110] "Forbidden Yemen Yields to a Yankee's Offer," *Life Magazine*, December 5, 1955.

[111] FRUS 1956-1957, Vol. XIII, 422, Telegram from Embassy in Saudi Arabia to the Department of State, October 31, 1955.

oil profits. [112] In return for the concessions, Crichton recounts that Ahmad was given "$300,000 in bonus payments and a bullet-proof Cadillac so he could take the ladies of the harem for rides."[113]



Fig. 2.5 Members of YDC waiting for audience with Imam Ahmad



Fig. 2.6 Imam Ahmad and YDC members

Having been originally founded as a base for American intelligence gathering, the YDC unsurprisingly accomplished very little actual oil exploration. By 1957, they had run out of money and were sold off to Resource Associates, an investment group that included Wallace Whitaker, the president of the Intercontinental Hotel chain and

[112] Phil H. Shook, "Yemen Oil Fields, Dallas Feud," *Dallas Star,* March 20, 1988. In 1981, Hunt Oil Company, discovered oil in the same region where Crichton and his team had obtained concessions. A fierce legal battle ensued to determine the owner of the Yemeni oil proceeds.

[113] Crichton and Anderson, *The Middle East Connection*. Crichton, who was among the first to recognize the importance of oil deposits in the Middle East, would later publish this book based partially on his experiences in Yemen as part of the YDC.

William Casey, who would later become the director of the CIA. Hatem al-Khalide, an American-educated Lebanese geologist, remained with the company in Yemen throughout its transition and would later write his own book based on his experience with the company, divulging the company's involvement with the US intelligence community.[114]

The State Department was reluctant to relinquish control over the Yemeni oil concessions for fear that it would be open to the Soviet technicians already present in the country and that the US would lose a vital intelligence source in the region. When other options such as Standard Oil Company of New Jersey remained reluctant to assume oil exploration in Yemen, the US State Department admitted that maintaining the oil concession "was only to preserve the US position on the Arabian Peninsula and not for commercial reasons.[115] After the departure of the YDC team, convinced John Mecom Oil, based in Houston, Texas to assume responsibility for oil exploration in Yemen. John Mecom, a prominent Texas oilman, was well-known for pioneering commercial oil exploration in the Middle East in countries including Libya, Jordan, and Yemen. Perhaps at the behest of the American Overseas Investment Corporation which was funding the expedition, Mecom Oil's exploration team moved to a location only 55km north of Hodeida, near the location where the Soviets were currently constructing

[114] El-Khalide, Hatem, *Sojourn in a Dreadful Land (Yemen Chronicles)* (Pittsburg: Dorrance Publishing, 2011). The book itself focuses around a fictional character that observes events in Yemen during the 1955. In his introduction, we learn of a CIA character operating under the cover of a geologist for an American oil firm. Portions of his own tale match the activities of the YDC as they actually occurred. Although the majority of the book reads like a fanciful novelette, Khalide provides additional material to fill out the thickening plot of US intelligence.

[115] FRUS 1955-1957, Vol. XIII, 434, Memorandum for the record by Thomas A. Cassilly of the Executive Secretariat, November 13, 1957. There was additional concern that if oil would actually be found, the State Department would have to explain why they used tax payer money to finance the ventures of a private oil company.

Port Ahmad.[116] On April 17, 1961 Imam Ahmad met with John Mecom Sr., the president of Mecom Oil and granted his company permission to conduct explorations for oil in the region of Salifa and in other regions of Tihama.[117]



Fig. 2.7 John Mecom Sr. standing to the right of King Hussein of Jordan in 1964[118]

Despite John Mecom's high expectations, no oil had been found, much to the ire of Imam Ahmad who had grown jealous of Saudi oil riches.[119] In an interview on May 3, 1962, Mecom was forced to account for the delays in the progress of the search for oil in the region of Tihama: "He explained that the delay in the exploration was due to

[116] GARF, Fond 4459, Opis 43, Dela 195, File 15, March 6, 1961, "American Business Concessions in Yemen," French Press Correspondent. The American Overseas Investment Corporation was a State Department organization that recruited private company to invest overseas as part of a broader American Foreign Policy mission.

[117] AVPRF, Fund 585, Opis 5, Papka 4, Dela 6, File 35, April 19, 1962. During a conversation that lasted for one hour, Hassan bin Ali and the Yemeni envoy to Rome Sa'id Muhammad 'Abd al-Qadus al-Bazir were present. Exploration rights in this area had previously been granted to a German oil company.

[118] This photograph is currently sitting on a Mecom Oil office wall in Houston, TX and was shared with me by his grandson John Mecom Jr.

[119] O'Ballance, *The War in Yemen*, 54.

natural conditions and promises to resume drilling after the arrival in Yemen of a new more powerful drilling rig."[120] John Mecom did not have much time to fulfill or renege on these promises as the country would be thrown into turmoil four months later, making oil exploration impossible for the rest of the decade. Oil would be discovered in 1981 in the very same locations where YDC and Mecom Oil teams explored in the 1950s and 1960s. The arrest of Muhammad Galeb Farakh, a Yemeni university student and an employee of Mecom Oil, on charges of spying for the Americans served as further evidence of the presence of American intelligence agents amongst the oil exploration teams.[121]

Throughout his six year flourishing relationship with Nasser and the Soviets, al-Badr formulated a policy centered around socialist reform and anti-British rhetoric. American onlookers were concerned that al-Badr would consciously or unconsciously open the doors of the Arabian Peninsula to Soviet penetration. Prince Hassan, Al-Badr's uncle and Imam Ahmad's brother who was deemed to have been "less militantly anti-Western" was the ideal Anglo-American choice as a successor to Ahmad. According to a 1958 CIA intelligence assessment, in the event of a succession crisis al-Badr was likely to receive the military support of the Egyptians and perhaps Soviet intervention as well.[122] British observers were particularly alarmed by al-Badr's claim to the Aden Protectorate and his declared interest in expanding the anti-British border attacks began under his father Imam Ahmad. Alan Lennox-Boyd, the first Viscount

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[120] AVPRF, Fund 585, Opis 14, Papka 7, Dela 9, File 89, May 3, 1962. "Al Nasser" published interview.

[121] GARF, Fond 4459, Opis 43, Dela 195, File 73, March 6, 1961. French Press Correspondent in Hodeidah reported the arrest. Muhammad Galeb Farakh had previously worked for the US diplomatic mission in 1959.

[122] FRUS 1958-1960, Vol. XII, 366, Special National Intelligence Estimate: The Yemen Situation, November 12, 1958.

Boyd of Merton briefed British Prime Minister Macmillan on joint British-American plans for a Yemeni coup to replace Imam Ahmad with his brother Hassan, thereby preventing the anti-British al-Badr from coming to power.[123] Hatem al-Khalide, as well, makes reference to the American attempts at befriending Hassan and orchestrating the assassination of Ahmad and al-Badr.[124] Even after Imam Ahmad's death, however, the US Foreign Office refused to intervene in support of Prince Hassan, unless "Yemen should veer too far in the direction of the Soviet Union."[125]

Conclusion

The events of September 26, 1962 were the culmination of decades of popular anti-Imam sentiment, planning, and failed attempts at the hands of the Free Yemeni Movement and their affiliates. Behind the scenes of national Yemeni revolutionary politics, Egypt, the USSR, and the US were making political inroads into the Imam's Yemen, forming alliances with members of the royal family. With the success of the 1962 coup and the foundation of the YAR, the broader international community was pulled into Yemeni power politics by a weak revolutionary central government that sought to replace its lack of tribal legitimacy with international support. In doing so, the Americans, British, Egyptians, Saudis and Soviets found themselves supporting sides in the conflict that would not have been considered only days earlier. What ensued was a series of political divisions and alliances dominated by historical irony and ad hoc diplomatic decisions. As will be discussed in the next chapter, the fateful decisions made by Abdullah al-Sallal in the first days of the coup and the ensuing

[123] Mawby, *British Policy in Aden*, 56.

[124] El-Khalide, *Sojourn in a Dreadful Land*.

[125] FRUS 1961-1963, Vol. XVIII, 51, Paper by the Person in charge of Arabian Peninsula Affairs (Seelye), September 20, 1962. It seems that Hassan's anti-Soviet stance was not sufficient to warrant American support.

international divide over the recognition of the new republic, set the stage for a lengthy and costly internationalized civil war in Yemen.

Chapter 3 – Recognizing the New Republic

YAR President Abdullah Sallal must have realized relatively quickly that al-Badr’s body was not among the rubble of his palace. It would seem that he committed the errors of his predecessors from the 1948 and 1955 coups by failing to carry out the regicide of the Hamid al-Din family. By this point, al-Badr was on his way north to rally tribal support for an assault on Sana’a. The YAR would last no more than a few weeks unless Sallal could elicit foreign assistance. Given al-Badr’s popularity with Nasser and the Soviet Union, it seemed unlikely that Sallal would receive their recognition if either power knew that the Imam was alive.

Although he failed to kill al-Badr, Sallal’s capture of the Sana’a radio station and telephone exchange was the key to saving his republic.[1] Upon hearing the first shots fired, Yemeni revolutionary officer Hassan al-‘Amri led an assault team to seize the communication stations and inform groups of coconspirators in Ta’iz, future YAR prime minister Hamoud al-Jaifi in Hodeidah, and other urban centers that the coup had been successfully launched.[2] With the radio and telephone in Sana’a in his possession, Sallal controlled domestic and global access to information about events on the ground in Yemen. Furthermore, his supporters captured al-Wusul palace, a reception area for foreign dignitaries who had been waiting for an audience with the new Imam. In the weeks following the coup, Sallal and his revolutionary council would conceal the truth of events on September 26 in an attempt to secure international recognition and support prior to the organization of an opposition to the republic.

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[1] Y. Aboul-Enein, “The Egyptian-Yemen War (1962-67): Egyptian Perspectives on Guerilla Warfare,” *Infantry*, January-February 2004. In addition to the radio and telephone stations, Sallal’s troops captured Qasr al-Silaah, the main armory and Central Security Headquarters. His followers were instructed to attack their respective sites when they heard the shelling on al-Badr’s palace.

[2] Oleg Gerasimovich Gerasimov, *Ĭemenskai͡a revoli͡ut͡sii͡a, 1962-1975 gg. : Probl. i suzhdenii͡a* (Moscow: Nauka, 1979), 44.

Claude Deffarge and Gordian Troeller, two French journalists who witnessed the first stages of the Yemen civil war, summarized Sallal's September 26, 1962 radio broadcast:

> "Armored units and tanks, acting on the orders of the military high command, have surrounded the royal palace and asked the tyrannical dictator to surrender. Upon his refusal, artillery opened fire on the palace. The next morning, the monarchy collapsed. The tyrant was dead, crushed under the rubble of his palace."[3]



Fig. 3.1 Al-Badr's palace the day after the September 1962 tank shelling.[4]

As the newly appointed deputy prime minister of the YAR, 'Abd al-Rahman al-Baydani managed to dig a deeper political hole for the new republic with his penchant for storytelling. During a radio address on October 11, Baydani declared that Yemeni forces had defeated Hassan's supporters in the city of Sa'dah and had seized all the national territory of Yemen. He boldly stated that any aggressive action on the part of Saudi Arabia will be construed as an act of war.[5] Deffarge and Troeller pressed

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[3] Deffarge, Claude and Troeller, Gordian, *Yemen 62-69: De la révolution "sauvage" a la trêve des guerriers,"* (Paris : Robert Laffont, 1969), 18.

[4] http://alamree.net. These photographs can be found in the website's Yemen civil war section.

[5] "Fierce Fighting in Yemen," *Pravda* October 12, 1962 (No. 285, 1).

Baydani on the issue of confirming al-Badr's death during an interview one week after the coup. He emphatically dismissed rumors that al-Badr was still alive. Baydani explained that "Yemenites like stories. They will grow weary of them quickly."[6]

Baydani was not alone in stretching the truth of facts on the battlefield. During an October 15 rally in Sana'a, Sallal declared: "We have defeated the rotten monarchy. The revolutionary regime is recognized by 20 countries. Anyone who tries to restore the monarchy in Yemen is the enemy. Our troops entered Sa'dah. They have defeated the enemy and send King Saud and King Hussein retreating. Our troops have already occupied Ma'rib."[7] Later that month Sallal reiterated his ambition to establish a "Republic of the Arabian Peninsula," further increasing Saudi suspicions of the new republic's aims.[8]

To make matters worse, on October 19, Sana'a radio pronounced the death of Crown Prince Hassan, who had assumed the role of Imam after the purported death of al-Badr. The YAR government ordered his property and that of fifteen other members of the royal family confiscated,[9] an approximate amount of 40,000 acres.[10] As the world soon found out, aside from requisitioning royal property, none of these pronouncements were true.

Baydani and Sallal's declarations did not last beyond November 12, 1962 when there was an official media affirmation that al-Badr was alive and leading the

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[6] Deffarge and Troeller, *Yemen*, 47. The authors were skeptical of Baydani's dismissal because al-Badr's body was not found under the rubble of the palace.

[7] "Events in Yemen: With the rotten monarchy ended forever," *Izvestia* (October 15, 1962), No. 246, 1.

[8] Rosser, "Education, Revolt, and Reform in Yemen," 56.

[9] "Hassan is Dead," *Pravda* (October 20, 1962), No. 293, 1.

[10] Bidwell, Robin, *The Two Yemens* (Essex and Boulder: Longman Group and Westview Press, 1983), 198.

counterrevolutionary forces in the north. French journalist Jean-Francois Chauvel conducted a public interview with al-Badr along with live photographs, confirming that he was alive and along the Saudi border.[11] In the interim, however, both Egyptian and Soviet sources believed that al-Badr, their once stalwart ally in South Arabia, was presumed dead. When al-Badr's relatively pro-American uncle Hassan declared himself Imam, Egypt and the Soviet Union were left with no other option but to recognize the new Yemeni republic and salvage what they could from their previous foreign policy investments and visions for the region. The Saudis, on the other hand, were compelled by historical and strategic circumstances to support the Yemeni opposition. Within months, Egypt and the USSR found themselves supporting a weak and unknown state, while Saudi Arabia was supporting a loose coalition of stateless tribes along its border. The US intervened in a situation rife with historical and political irony, offering the Saudis and Egyptians a diplomatic solution to their mutual strategic conundrums. Negotiating the withdrawal of reluctant foreign support for the Yemen civil war would become the dominant theme throughout the next two years of the conflict.

The Egyptian Pledge of Support

Although Nasser played a role, albeit a minor one with little significance, in overthrowing Imam Ahmad, the decision to support the YAR was not inevitable. Nasser and the Egyptian population did not harbor favorable opinions of the Yemenis, whom they regarded as violent and uneducated Bedouins.[12] There is no doubt that these negative perceptions factored into the formation of Nasser's Yemeni policy and the need to invest a vast amount of Egyptian resources in support of the revolution.

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[11] Deffarge and Troeller, *Yemen*, 94.

[12] Badeau, John Stothoff, *The Middle East Remembered* (Washington DC: Middle East Institute, 1983), 215.

The following satirical story illustrates the skepticism that many Egyptians held towards the new Yemeni government:

> "The story went around Cairo that Sallal sent a telegram to the Egyptian government saying, now that the war is succeeding the greatest need of revolutionary Yemen is education. Please send us 500 schoolteachers. The next week came another telegram saying, the greatest need in revolutionary Yemen is still education. Please send us 20,000 schoolbooks. The third week there was another telegram saying, the greatest need in revolutionary Yemen remains education. Please send us 50,000 students at once."[13]

Between September 29 and October 4, 1962 a series of telegrams were exchanged between Sallal and Nasser including a formal request for recognition, the UAR recognition, subsequent offers of aid, and finally a YAR response thanking Egypt for recognition and aid.[14] Egyptian General Ali 'Abd al-Hameed was dispatched to Sana'a for an investigative mission on September 29. After seeing the alarming state of the revolutionary council and the armed forces supporting the state, Hameed asked Nasser for a *Sa'aqah*, or Special Force battalion, which arrived on October 5 and acted as Sallal's personal bodyguard.[15]

In the midst of, or perhaps in response to this correspondence, on October 1 Muhammad Zubayri, the new YAR Minister of Education, and 'Abd al-Rahman al-Baydani, made an important trip to Cairo to enlist Nasser's help.[16] It was clear from the urgency of this first foreign trip for the new republic and the timing of it so near to the start of the revolution that Nasser's support for Arab revolutionaries was not taken for granted. It took until October 6 for an Egyptian steamer to arrive in the Soviet-

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[13] *Ibid.*, 215

[14] AVPRF, Fond 585, Opis 14, Papka 7, Dela 10, File 12-21. Reports on YAR-UAR telegram exchange, September 29 and October 4, 1962.

[15] Aboul-Enein, "The Egyptian-Yemen War."

[16] AVPRF, Fond 585, Opis 5, Papka 4, Dela 6, File 126, October 1, 1962.

constructed port of Hodeidah with soldiers in uniform.[17] While there were certainly stipulations and rumors that Egyptian soldiers had arrived in Yemen within hours of the revolution, the October 6 arrival was the first widely documented demonstration of Egyptian support and might well have been a reaction to Zubayri and Baydani's visit several days earlier.

In a cable sent to Nasser on October 3 Sallal declared that, as a representative of the Yemeni government, he was adhering to the tripartite Jeddah Military Pact of 1956 made between Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Yemen. In his response Nasser assured Sallal that "the UAR is pledged to live up to every pact it has concluded and moreover, emphasize that the UAR put the Jeddah Pact into effect at the very moment it received news of the Yemeni people's revolution."[18] Mahmoud Riad, Egyptian Ambassador to the UN explained that the Egyptian intervention was a response to Saudi assistance given to royalists rather than an Egyptian invasion.[19] In justifying Egyptian intervention in Yemen, Nasser cited the collective defense clause in Article 2 of the Jeddah Pact:

> "The contracting states consider that any armed aggression upon any one of them, or upon its forces, is an aggression directed against all of them, and hence, in conformity with the legal right of individual and collective defense for their existence, they are all bound to hasten to the relief of the country aggressed upon, and to take at once all necessary measures, by contributing resources and armed forces to repel the attack, and re-establish security and peace."[20]

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[17] AVPRF, Fond 585, Opis 5, Papka 4, Dela 6, File 112, October 6, 1962. The arrival of Egyptian troops was accompanied by the Algeria, Tunisia, Yugoslav, Hungary, Sudan, Libya, Bulgaria, Democratic Republic of Germany recognitions of the YAR.

[18] *Arab Political Encyclopedia: Documents and Notes* (vol. 11, 1962-63).

[19] TNA, FO 371/16883/BM 1071/54 (I), June 21, 1963, UAR letter to UN.

[20] Rahmy, *Egyptian Policy*, 102.

Using the Jeddah Pact as justification for Egyptian intervention in Yemen was both halfhearted and in contradiction with the wording of the pact. First, when Nasser issued a declaration of military support on October 3 there was no foreign presence in Yemen. In fact, the supporters of the Imam had not even publicly declared their opposition until two days after Nasser's declaration of support. Furthermore, the pact called for the collective action and agreement of all three parties including Saudi Arabia, with whom Nasser did not consult prior to making his declaration.[21] Muhammad Haykal would further elaborate on this justification in a November 1962 *Al Ahram* article: "We did not go to Yemen to start a war but to prevent a conflict."[22]

The identification of the Yemeni state that was party to the Jeddah agreement was an added layer of difficulty. In justifying Nasser's legal right to intervene in Yemen, legal historian Alf Ross explains that "although the military occupation of one state by another is a violation of the law of nations, the prior or simultaneous consent of the existing government legitimates the intervention." This means that Nasser referred to earlier agreements made with the Imam's government, despite the fact that Egypt was supporting the Imam's deposition.[23]

Nasser might have offered legal justifications for military intervention and support of the new Yemeni republic, but the truth is that Baydani and Zubayri simply showed up at the right time. Defarge and Troeller claimed that "the Yemeni operation was a miracle for Nasser," and may have temporarily saved his political isolation in the Arab

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[21] Mark Robertson, "Twentieth Century Conflict in the Fourteenth Century: Intervention in Yemen" (*The Fletcher Forum,* Winter 1989, 95-111).

[22] *Al Ahram*, November 16, 1962.

[23] Meir Ossad, "Legal Aspects of the Egyptian Intervention in Yemen," *Israel Law Review* 5 (1970), 226. Nasser used the Jeddah agreement despite the fact that it was renounced by both Egypt and Yemen during the 1961 political tensions between the two countries. On November 10, 1962, the YAR and UAR concluded a new military agreement that presumably annulled or replaced the previous Jeddah agreement.

world.[24] As the historian Eli Podeh explains, origins of Nasser's intervention in Yemen were found during the Iraq crisis in 1961. On June 25, 1961 'Abd al-Karim Qasim, the Prime Minister of Iraq since his coup d'état against the monarchy in 1958, declared his intentions to incorporate Kuwait as part of Iraq. This announcement only six days after the British granted Kuwait independence precipitated a regional-crisis as British and Arab armies dispatched troops to protect Kuwait's sovereignty. According to Podeh, the 1961 Kuwait-Iraq Crisis was the first Arab dispute "neither initiated by Nasser nor in which he played a leading role…Iraq's bid for Kuwait may be construed as a bid for Arab leadership as well, though Qasim would have not necessarily admitted it." Following a military coup d'état in Syria in September 1961, the new Syrian military regime withdrew from the United Arab Republic (UAR) with Egypt. Ostensibly to prepare his troops for a possible intervention in Syria, Nasser prematurely withdrew Egyptian soldiers from Kuwait on December 20, 1961, leaving him politically isolated in the Arab world.[25] Although Egypt remained the only member of the UAR after 1961, Nasser continued referring to his country as the UAR until after his death in 1970.

With each passing month, Nasser's political stature and the well-being of the nationalized Egyptian economy continued to deteriorate. The Yemen civil war was a foreign policy opportunity for Nasser to become relevant once again. Khaled Mohieddin, a member of the Egyptian Free Officers Movement and a close confidant of Nasser, stated emphatically that "The Yemen war was a response to the break with Syria…a sign that Egypt's Arab role was not over."[26] Nasser's intentions in Yemen were not specifically for the success of the YAR. Rather, he envisioned Sana'a as a

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[24] Deffarge and Troeller, *Yemen,* 88.

[25] Eli Podeh, "'Suez in Reverse': The Arab response to the Iraqi Bid for Kuwait," *Diplomacy and Statecraft* 14:1 (2010), 103-130.

[26] Habib, Tariq, *Milaffat thawrat yuliyu (Cairo: Al Ahram*, 1997), 244.

base through which he could extort economic and political aid from the Americans, Saudis, and Soviets and score political points against the British in Aden.[27] The relationship between Egypt and the YAR was formalized when a five-year mutual defense pact was signed by Sallal and Anwar Sadat in Sana'a on November 10, 1962 and ratified by Nasser the next day.[28] According to an *Al Thawra* article in December 1962, even Yemeni republicans began to view their own revolution as part of Nasser's grand vision.[29] This vision was codified in the April 17, 1963 Cairo Charter signed by Iraq, Syria, the UAR and the YAR, the outlined process for forming a unified "fertile-crescent" and larger "Arab federal state".[30]

Nasser made the decision to support the YAR and Sallal under the assumption that al-Badr was dead. 'Abd al-Latif al-Baghdadi insisted that Nasser would not have supported Sallal and the YAR if al-Badr had been confirmed alive at an earlier date.[31] Mahmoud Riad, Egypt's representative to the UN and Minister of Foreign Affairs during the 1960s, concurred with this point and added that "Egypt would not have intervened in Yemen because al-Badr was an open-minded Imam and wanted to bring about a real change in Yemen."[32] While Baghdadi and Riad may have been advocating

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[27] Muhammad Fawzi, *Thiwar Yuliyu Yitahaddithun* (Cairo, 1987), 126.

[28] Dan Hofstadter, *Egypt & Nasser Volume 2, 1957-1966* (New York: Facts on File, 1973), 180.

[29] "Sallal traveled by plane to Hodeidah while an economic conference was held in Sana'a; 'Nasser our Ally'," *Al Thawra* (December 31, 1962). Copies of *Al Thawra*, an official government-funded newspaper, can be found in the Yemeni Presidential compound. At least according to the archivist's account, other copies of Yemeni newspapers were destroyed during the siege of Sana'a in 1968.

[30] Gamal Abdel Nasser, *Speeches and Press-Interviews*, January-December 1963 (Cairo: UAR Information Department, 1964), 102-3, Joint Communique on Talks in Cairo between President Abdullah al-Sallal and President Gamal Abdel Nasser, June 10, 1963.

[31] Habib, Tariq. *Milaffat thawrat yuliyu (Cairo: Al Ahram*, 1997), 240.

[32] Laura M. James, *Nasser at War: Arab Images of the Enemy* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 66.

a self-serving analysis of Egypt's decision to intervene, it certainly seems likely that had Nasser received word from al-Badr during his meeting with Baydani and Zubayri, he would not have offered his support to an untested leader and to a republic that had yet to exhibit popular and tribal support. On this matter, Riad readily blamed Baydani for intentionally feeding Egyptian officials with misinformation. Anwar Sadat, Baydani's brother-in-law, particularly "relied on Baydani's analysis of the situation in Yemen." Riad explained that "because Sadat did not like to read, al-Baydani was able to control his mind."[33]

US ambassador to Cairo under Kennedy, John Badeau provided his own interpretation of Nasser's opportunistic intervention in Yemen:

> "There is some reason to think that the revolutionary groups both within and outside Yemen may have expected Egyptian support if they mounted a potentially successful coup d'état. Yet the decision to enter the Yemen struggle was largely a pragmatic one, made at the time of the revolt and in the light of its particular character."[34]

According to multiple accounts, Nasser sent a small contingent of forces to support the YAR, likely intending only a short and limited Egyptian presence. He had been led to think that al-Badr was killed and supporting Sallal and his revolutionaries was the only gateway into the Arabia Peninsula. Former Egyptian General Muhammad Fawzi, who served as minister of defense during the 1960s, explained that Egyptian support was originally conceived as "a limited action comprising political, moral and material support -- by no means was it envisaged as an action that could drain our resources." Nasser sent two battalions of Special Forces and an aircraft squadron, a force that he

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[33] Saeed M. Badeeb, *The Saudi-Egyptian Conflict over North Yemen* 1962-1970,(Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1986), 133. Baydani's outlandish tales seem to have made him the favorite scapegoat for Egyptian, Yemenis, and Saudis.

[34]John S. Badeau, *The American Approach to the Arab World* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), 127.

described as “symbolic”. By 1964, the Egyptian commitment to Sallal would reach 70,000 troops.[35]

Saudi Arabia and Tribal Loyalties

The 1934 Treaty of Ta’if between Saudi Arabia and Yemen brought an end to the first modern conflict between the two Arabian states. The Saudi war effort in Yemen had been led by Crown Prince Saud ibn ‘Abd al-Aziz, who would be king during the outbreak of the Yemen civil war. The first article of the treaty brought hostilities to an end and created the foundation for a peaceful coexistence between the two countries. Article 18 added on to those foundations and guaranteed that both parties would not support or recognize any armed opposition to either monarchy.

> **Article 18**: In the event of insurrection or hostilities taking place within the country of one of the high contracting parties, both of them mutually undertake:
> a) To take all necessary effective measures to prevent aggressors or rebels from making use of their territories.
> b) To prevent fugitives from taking refuge in their countries, and to expel them if they do enter.
> c) To prevent his subjects from joining the rebels and to refrain from encouraging or supplying them
> d) To prevent assistance, supplies, arms and ammunition reaching the enemy or rebels.[36]

In 1937, Saudi Arabia, Yemen and Iraq, the first three independent Arab states, signed a mutual defense pact further solidifying the relationship established by the 1934 Ta’if Agreement. During both the 1948 and 1955 coups in Yemen, the opposition to the Hamid al-Din family asked Saudi Arabia for aid and recognition. In both instances the Saudis refused to recognize their new regime, citing the first and

[35] “The June Challenge,” *Al Ahram Weekly*, February 6, 2013.

[36] “Ta’if Agreement, 1934” (www.al-bab.com/yemen/pol/int1.htm)

eighteenth articles of the Ta'if Agreement.[37] During the 1950s, King Saud and Imam Ahmad forged a close relationship, punctuated by the 1956 Jeddah agreement and a continuously expanding trade relationship across a porous border to the north.



Fig. 3.2 Imam Ahmad and King Saud with their families during the 1950s[38]

As part of the Ta'if agreement, Imam Yahya of Yemen ceded the northern Yemeni territories of Najran, 'Asir, and Jizan to Saudi Arabia for a period of sixty years. Although Sunni Arabs constituted the great majority of these territories, a significant minority consisted of Shi'ite Zaydi Arabs who were ethnically Yemeni and who adhered to the authority of the Zaydi Yemeni Imam.[39] According to Article 22 of the Ta'if Treaty, the tenets of the agreement would be in effect for twenty lunar years, after

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[37] Badeeb, *The Saudi-Egyptian Conflict*, 16. Badeeb's perspective on the Yemen civil war is written from a Saudi prospective. While the Ta'if Agreement was certainly invoked, it is unclear how seriously the articles of the agreement factored into actual decision-making.

[38] http://alamree.net.

[39] Zayd is a Shi'i Muslim school of thought whose followers are known as "fivers". The majority of Yemen's northern country adheres to Zaydi Islam while the southern half of the country belong predominantly to the Shafi'i school of Sunni thought. The 20th Century Yemeni Imams and the Hamid al-Din family date back to 1918 with Yemen's independence from the Ottoman Empire under Imam Yahya. Yahya was Imam al-Badr's grandfather and the father of Imam Ahmad.

which either Yemen or Saudi Arabia would be able to demand arbitration in the case of a dispute. In 1954, Imam Ahmad allowed the twenty years limitation to lapse without introducing arbitration. Upon ascension to the throne, al-Badr had no intentions of calling for arbitration either. It was not until the founding of the YAR that Sallal made a public declaration calling for an arbitration of the border dispute.[40] The YAR government announced their specific intentions to regain the former Yemeni province of 'Asir. The Egyptian air force began flying missions over Saudi Arabia, dropping caches of small arms for use by local 'freedom fighters'. Rather than use the weapons against their government, however, local Bedouins sold the arms on the market or directly to the 'Asir Government.[41]

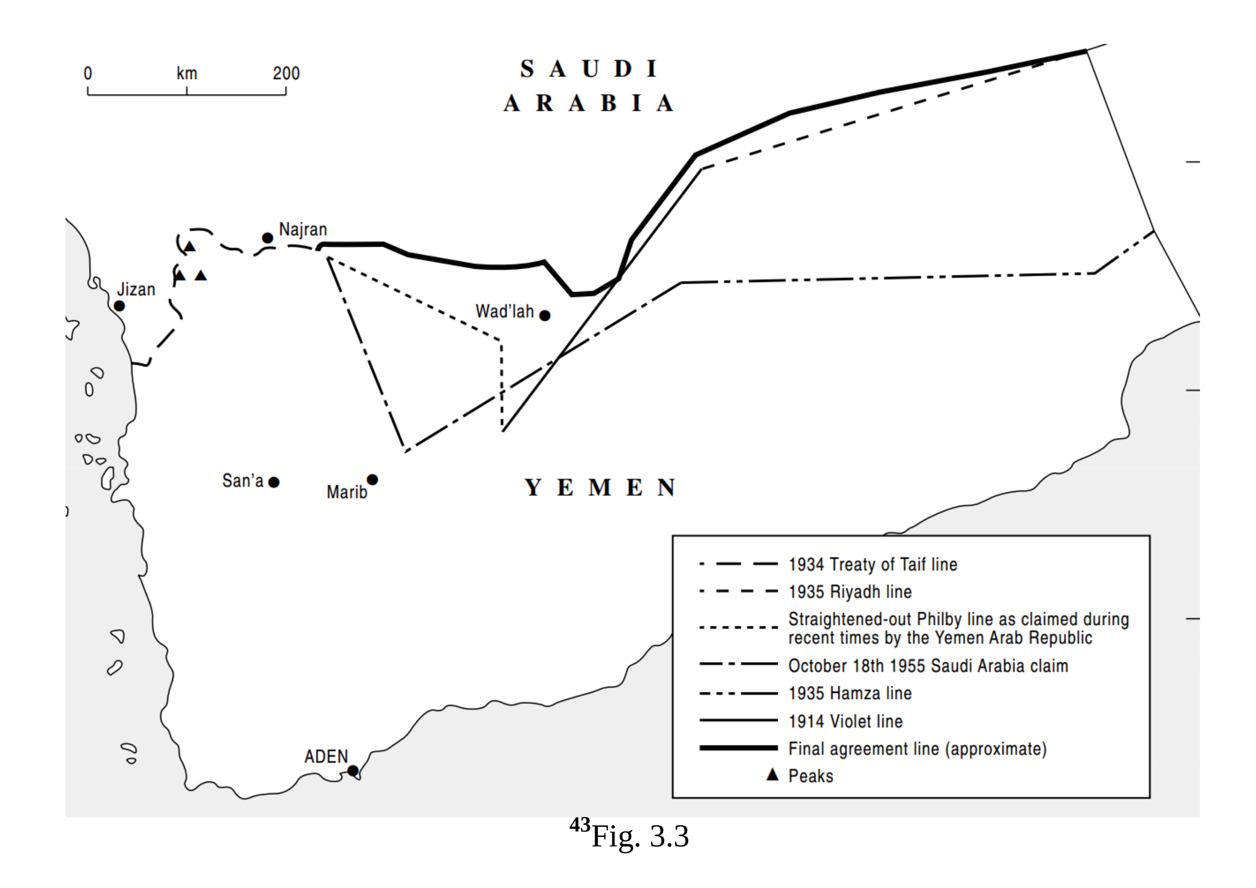
Parker Hart, US ambassador to Saudi Arabia in 1963, retold a similar story describing Nasser's anti-Saudi intrigues:

> "One of the highlights of this episode was the dropping of 108 bundles of ammunition and weaponry on the Saudi coast in February of '63 in the expectation on Cairo's side that the Bedouins and others would pick these weapons up and go after the government. They misestimated the whole situation—the Bedouins turned the weapons in to the police. And there was no party of revolutionaries to pick up the enormous quantity of weaponry, ready-to-go-weapons, put the clips right in and start firing. I saw them, inspected them myself…This weapons drop deepened, of course, the feeling of distrust in Washington of Nasser's intentions."[42]

[40] Badeeb, *The Saudi-Egyptian Conflict*, 10.

[41] Robert Lacey, *The Kingdom: Arabia and the House of Saud* (New York: Avon Books, 1981), 346.

[42] JFK Library, Parker Hart, Oral History, 39



[43]Fig. 3.3

YAR Deputy Prime Minister Baydani, having also spread false rumors about al-Badr and Hassan's death, broadened his path of rhetorical destruction by declaring a state of war against Saudi Arabia. He ordered the closure of the Yemeni legation in Saudi Arabia and publicized a hostile stance towards the Saudi monarchy: "We have taken all measures to move the battle to the Saudi territory itself and to Riyadh itself, if necessary."[44]

According to a US intelligence bulletin, Baydani "charged that Saudi actions in the present situation were tantamount to aggression, and stated that Yemen therefore considers itself to be in a state of war with Saudi Arabia." According to the CIA

[43] John Roberts, "The Saudi-Yemeni Boundary Treaty," *IBRU Boundary and Security Bulletin* (2000).

[44] Badeeb, *The Saudi-Egyptian Conflict*, 53. The Yemeni army in the beginning of October did not have the capability to invade Saudi Arabia. These threats were entirely empty and were likely intended to garner foreign support for the Yemeni war effort. (Bidwell, *Two Yemens*, 198)

analysis "this statement, while certain to add to the tensions in the area, appears to be primarily an attempt to justify the presence in Yemen of Egyptian forces. It follows frequent recent assertions by Cairo that the UAR, under the old "Jidda Pact" signed in 1956 by Egypt, Yemen, and Saudi Arabia, would defend Yemen against outside aggression."[45]

Yemeni Prince Hassan and Saudi Prince Faisal were sitting together in New York at a UN meeting when news of the coup arrived. Faisal immediately told Hassan, who would be named Imam following the announcement of his nephew al-Bar's death, to fly straight to Saudi Arabia and appeal to King Saud for aid in defending in the Imamate.[46] As members of the Hamid al-Din family began crossing the border into Saudi Arabia, King Saud and his brother Prince Faisal did not turn them away. The official Saudi position was described as an adherence to the Muslim and Arabian honorable custom of *sharaf,* offering refuge to the deposed Imam's family. This response was further grounded in the historical tenets of both the Treaty of Ta'if and the Jeddah Pact. Similar to Nasser's legal approach, the Saudis claimed they were adhering to the military alliances stipulated in both agreements. Nasser and the Saudis differed only in the identity of the legitimate Yemeni state, whether it was the YAR or the Imam.

From a strategic perspective the Saudis could rely on two elements in their favor: the predominantly Zaydi Muslims of the northern highlands tribes were staunch advocates of the Yemeni Imam and the northern highlands themselves, difficult terrain for Nasser's mechanized army, would serve as a partial buffer between Egyptian troops

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[45]FOIA, Central Intelligence Bulletin (October 11, 1962). Baydani's declaration was cited from a Middle East News Agency dispatch.

[46] Yael Vered, *Coup and War in Yemen* (Tel Aviv, Israel: Am Oved Publishers, 1967), 36.

and Saudi territory.[47] Additionally, support of al-Badr helped the Saudis avoid domestic tensions in the border regions of ‘Asir, Najran, and Jizan where there was a sizable minority of Zaydi tribesmen tracing their ethnic origins to pre-1934 Yemen. Avoiding internal tribal conflict was particularly important as the ruling structure was entering a two year succession crisis that would last from 1962-64.[48]

In January 1963, Egyptian military commanders Field-Marshal ‘Abd al-Hakim Amer and General Ali Amer made an extended visit to Sana’a, where they discovered a failing republican military campaign. Royalist forces were moving southwards, threatening republican positions. Nasser responded with a bombing campaign on the Saudi border in spring 1963, in an attempt to destabilize royalist bases in Jizan, Khamis Mushayt, and Abha. One of the bombs was reported to have been dropped on a hospital in Abha killing thirty-six patients. Egyptian targeting of Saudi border regions caused further unease and alarm among the members of the Saudi royal family.[49]

The Egyptian bombing campaign was accompanied by anti-Saudi propaganda. During the Aswan High Dam Celebrations in January 1963, Nasser shared embellished accusations, rivaling only Baydani’s fanciful tales. According to Nasser, Saudis and royalist were being armed by Pakistan who was providing planes and daily shipments

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[47] Lacey, *The Kingdom*, 346.

[48] See Lacey, *The Kingdom* for a full account of the Saudi succession crisis. Saudi King Saud’s health was declining along with his mental faculties, leaving most of the governing responsibilities to his brother Faisal. Periodic legal attempts to replace Saud as king were met with continued resistance from Saud and his supporters. It wasn’t until 1964 that Faisal was officially named king.

[49] Lacey, *The Kingdom*, 346.

of 500 guns to the Ta'if airport. This marked the first months of Nasser's anti-Saudi campaign, a theme that would continue through the war.[50]

The Formation of an Opposition

Following the precedence of his forefathers and his own actions after the 1948 and 1955 coups, al-Badr fled north to rally the tribal militias. In 1948 Ahmad had also fled north to the village of Hajjah where he rallied the tribal armies for an assault on Sana'a within three weeks of the coup.[51] The northern tribes, particularly those of the Hashid and Bakil confederations were effective fighters and were Zaydi, therefore more likely to support the Zaydi Imam.[52] Al-Badr's northward journey took a somewhat different path as he was pursued by bands of republican supporters for the entire journey, an additional sign that Sallal and Baydani must have known he was not killed in the shelling of his palace.

After lasting through a twenty-four hour siege of his royal palace, al-Badr slipped out of Sana'a to the village of Hamdan. From there, he continued his journey with a dozen bodyguards to the walled town of 'Amran around fifty kilometers northwest of Sana'a. Continuously pursued by small republican bands, however, the Imam was forced to cross the Saudi border in search of refuge. What made al-Badr's retreat even more difficult was the animosity that local Sana'a sheikhs felt toward the Hamid al-Din family. Many of them were ready to raise arms against al-Badr in response to the

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[50] Gamal Abdel Nasser, *Speeches and Press-Interviews*, January-December 1963, 35. Address by President Gamal Abdel Nasser at the Popular Rally in Aswan on the Occasion of the High Dam Celebrations, January 9, 1963.

[51] Paul Dresch, *Tribes, Government, and History in Yemen* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 238.

[52] Hofstadter, *Egypt & Nasser*, 195.

grievances they held against his father's strong-arm policies.[53] Al-Badr did not make it to Saudi Arabia until October 8 by the earliest account. In his absence, opposition to the YAR was already declared. On October 6, the same day that the first official Egyptian troops arrived in Yemen, a royalist radio station operated by Hassan and his supporters on Saudi territory broadcast an announcement that members of the royal family had fled to Saudi Arabia and were organizing an armed opposition to Sallal and the YAR.[54]

In forming the opposition, al-Badr convinced many of the northern Zaydi tribes to declare their support for his anti-Egyptian efforts. He declared that "Yemen would be a graveyard for the Egyptians just as it was a graveyard for the Turkish."[55] Muhammad Sa'id al-Attar, a French-educated Yemeni who founded the Yemen Bank for Reconstruction and Development and served as the YAR Minister of Economics, explained the historical and political reasoning behind the formation of a northern opposition to the republic. Historically, given the difficulty of their terrain, the northern highlands could not be conquered by a foreign army, whether Egyptian, Turkish, or Saudi. Although the core of the allegiance to al-Badr was religious, as the number of Egyptian soldiers increased, the northern tribes fought for independence against what they perceived as a foreign invader.[56]

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[53] Dresch, *Tribes, Government, and History in Yemen*, 243. Much of this hostility was related to Ahmad's tribal hostage system and forcing tribes to repay al-Badr's bribes in 1961.

[54] Bidwell, *Two Yemens*, 198.

[55] Vered, Yael, *Hafikhah u-milḥamah be-Teman* (Tel Aviv : Am 'Oved, 1967), 39.

[56] Muhammad Sa'id al-Attar, *Le Sous-Développement Economique et Social du Yemen* (Algiers : Tiers-Monde, 1964). Al-Attar fell out of favor with the right-leaning government that emerged after the civil war and accepted a position as a diplomat to the UN for the next 15 years.

Al-Badr's supporters were dubbed "royalists", a designation that al-Badr did not agree with, as he made clear in a later interview:

> "Royalists…I do not like that word, because it causes false associations. We fight for our beliefs, for our tradition, for our home – not for the crown, but for a new world order. Who can lead our people and our suffering people from his [Nasser's] war to freedom? Have a look at us, my brothers and I, we live with our people."[57]

There is no consensus as to the origins of the term "royalists" although perhaps this may have been conceived by the British who had developed their own alliance with the 'feudal' sheikhs and sultans in South Arabia.[58] The term "royalist" may have been an attempt by British media to link US support for Saudi monarchs (royalists) to their counterparts in Yemen. Imam al-Badr's supporters referred to themselves as "loyalists" and their territory as "Free Yemen."

[57] *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, May 2, 1964, Interview with Imam Al Badr. The Imam's supporters referred to themselves as "loyalists" and called their controlled region "Free Yemen".

[58] Helen Lackner, *PDR Yemen: Outpost of Socialist Development in Arabia* (London: Ithaca Press, 1985). The term "royalist" evidently has more progressive connotations than monarchy or feudal.



Fig. 3.4 The red flag of the Mutawakkilite Kingdom of Yemen (royalist supporters) at the center of celebration in a public square in the northern city of Sa'dah.[59]

Once al-Badr was confirmed alive, Sallal's claim of legitimacy in the absence of a significant royalist opposition was no longer viable. According to a report from the Soviet embassy in Yemen, the Yemeni revolution itself was in danger of being lost entirely and Sallal was trying desperately to go on the defensive:

> "Al-Sallal said that the goal of Saud, Hassan, and British imperialists was the restoration of the reactionary regime in Yemen…The Prime Minister had previously refuted the rumors that Prince Hassan was in Sa'dah and al-Badr of the Hamid al Din family was in Hajjah. He said that the Yemeni revolution had already destroyed the reactionary Hamid al Din dynasty."[60]

The initial momentum of al-Badr's opposition and the relative weakness of Sallal's military effort and political support drew an increasing number of Egyptian soldiers and resources into the conflict. Despite Nasser's increasing commitment of troops and

[59] http://alamree.net.

[60] AVPRF, Fond 585, Opis 5, Papka 4, Dela 6, File 155, October 8, 1962,.

resources, he was confounded by Yemeni tribal politics. In the first weeks and months of the civil war, tribal sheikhs were continuously switching alliances, accepting bribes from either the royalist or the republican camps, and forming their own inter-tribal truces. Although fighting was at times intensified and casualties were exacerbated by the presence of the Egyptian army, certain necessities of life trumped all other political considerations. For example, the Hajjah region village of al-Ahnum's *qat* trade with the plateau continued unabated throughout the war, "under agreements guaranteed in common by men who on other grounds were at daggers drawn."[61] Much to Nasser's chagrin, the success of the YAR began to symbolize the success of Nasser and his vision of Arab nationalism. After having declared his public support for the YAR, Nasser could not forsake his powerless ally, even after al-Badr was discovered alive.

Deffarge and Troeller argue that Sallal was a last minute addition to the revolutionary council that was led primarily by young officers without comparable revolutionary qualifications and history. "His personality is not the decisive element of this revolution, for it was not intended that he be made the leader of the group …he was only a last minute choice." Furthermore, with the Republic only a week old, Sallal had already been dubbed by foreign media with nicknames such as the "dictator", "Moscow's man", or "Nasser's agent".[62] To be fair, Deffarge and Troeller held similarly condescending opinions of al-Badr claiming: "Everyone knows that al-Badr is an idiot...Every time his father turned his back, he was going to the Egyptians. Was it not he who appointed Sallal the commander in chief of the Yemeni army?"[63] In the

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[61] Dresch, *Tribes, Government, and History*, 245. One wonders how many tribal truces were undertaken as a result of these wartime *qat* chews.

[62] Deffarge and Troeller, *Yemen*, 73.

[63] Deffarge and Troeller, *Yemen*, 97. This opinion was based on their conversation with an unspecified American official in Beirut.

years of conflict ahead, the two parties of the Yemen civil war would be dominated by ineffectual and unpopular leaders, who would in turn be dominated and overshadowed by the interests of regional and international powers.

Soviet Relations with the YAR

Prior to 1962, the Soviets had invested a great deal of political, economic, and industrial capital into cultivating a relationship with this impoverished state in South Arabia. Soviet presence in Yemen was an important element in the USSR grand strategy for the Red Sea and the Middle East in general. In an attempt to explain the Soviet vision for South Arabia the French journal *Perspective* printed a prophetic observation of Soviet efforts in Yemen and its place within their overall Middle East strategy:

> "Since the North African phase of Soviet expansion was completed, now begins the new stage which will lie in the complete subjugation of the entire Arabian Peninsula and especially out towards the Indian Ocean and the Persian Gulf. This is a much more reasonable goal than Cuba."[64]

The historian P.J. Vatikiotis described Soviet relations with Egypt and by extension in Yemen in similar terms:

> "The Soviets throughout the sixties considered Egypt, whether under Nasser or his successor, the essential center of their hoped-for power position in the Mediterranean. This, in turn, is linked to their emerging global naval strategy that encompasses the Indian Ocean. It gives them not only a deterrent against the U.S. Sixth Fleet, but affords them also several potential political advantages, apart from the Middle East, in southern and western Europe and Africa."[65]

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[64] GARF, Fond 4459, Opis 43, Dela 2310, File 294. French Journal *Perspective*. January 13, 1963.

[65] P. J. Vatikiotis, "The Soviet Union and Egypt: The Nasser Years," in *The Soviet Union and the Middle East: the Post-World War II Era*, edited by Ivo J. Lederer and Wayne S. Vucinich (Stanford: Hoover Institute Press, 1974), 131. Vatikiotis grew up in Mandate Palestine and went to college in AUC during WWII where he became friendly with members of Nasser's administration.

Galia Golan agreed with this perception as well claiming that the goal of Soviet relations with Egypt was to obtain a strategic location to open a Mediterranean Squadron to counter the US

As noted in the previous chapter, Crown Prince al-Badr was open to greater Soviet penetration and was an advocate of socialist reforms in Yemen. While the French journal *Perspective*, might not have compared al-Badr (or Sallal for that matter) with Fidel Castro in the same fashion that Yemen was equated with Cuba, it is likely that the USSR would have maintained its relationship and support of al-Badr, had they known he was still alive. For the entire month of October, both *Izvestia* and *Pravda* referred to al-Badr's death in dozens of articles and do not entertain the notion that he might still be alive. With the pronouncement of Badr's death, the Soviets rushed to be the first (arguably the second behind Egypt, although this was a point of mutual contention) country to recognize the new republic. While the continued cultivation of a relationship with the Yemeni people could potentially secure Soviet investment in the port of Hodeidah the speed and degree of the Soviet reversal in policy from supporting al-Badr to vilifying the Imamate was surprising.

During 1961 and 1962 articles published in *Izvestia* and *Pravda* made every effort to praise Imam Ahmad and the blossoming relationship between the USSR and Yemen. Published letters between Khrushchev and Ahmad emphasize Soviet-Yemeni friendship, port Ahmad, and praise Ahmad's progress in fighting colonialism and advancing reforms.[66] By October 10, 1962, however, *Izvestia* began portraying Prince Hassan, the Hamid al-Din family, and the royalists as a tool of the Saudis and Western oil companies like ARAMCO.[67] Indeed from the ease with which Soviets switched

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Sixth Fleet. (Golan, Galia, *Soviet Policies in the Middle East from World War Two to Gorbachev* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 56-7).

[66] "Port Ahmad-Beacon of Light," *Pravda*, April 12, 1961 (No. 102, 1).

[67] "Yemen in Peril," *Izvestia*, October 10, 1962 (No. 242, 2)

allegiances, it appears that their objectives in Yemen were opportunistic and pragmatic rather than guided by an overarching national ideology.[68]

Soviet Premier Khrushchev's initial telegram recognized the YAR on October 1, 1962 and offered moral and political support, but was reluctant to include a military commitment. The Soviets understood the important problems that could arise from the local war and the difficulties of achieving peace and complete disarmament. According to a pre-revolutionary study, most Yemenis lived on less than $100/year, 95% of the populace was illiterate, and there were serious deficiencies in the national health care.[69] This concise description of severe problems in Yemeni society would become the Soviet "to-do-list" in order to garner the loyalty and appreciation of the local populace and the ruling class.

Beginning in early 1961, teams of Soviet engineers and technicians undertook to open schools, factories, hospitals, and other vital infrastructure, garnering a great deal of fanfare at each stage. In doing so, the Soviets treated Yemen as another of the politically neutral countries of Africa and Asia that participated in the 1955 Bandung Conference, focusing their aid on social-welfare, areas that would "win the hearts and minds" of the general populace. The USSR staffed a large contingent of technological advisors and providing political, military and economic aid while funding these national projects. When Sallal assumed the presidency of the YAR, he continuously maintained an outwardly positive view of the USSR in rhetoric as well as action.[70]

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[68] Alan R. Taylor, *The Superpowers and the Middle East* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1991), 133. Taylor cites Fred Halliday's assessment in formulating his opinion of Soviet opportunism.

[69] RGANI, Fond 5, Opis 30, Dela 452, List 6, 1961.National assessment was written by V. Kornev, Deputy Head of the Department of Middle East-Soviet Relations.

[70] RGANI, Fond 5, Opis 30, Dela 452, List 12-13, June 1963.

During his first trip to Cairo, Sallal spoke highly of peaceful Soviet initiatives and expressed support for Khrushchev's state message.

According to a CIA intelligence report, by October 19, 1962, the Soviets had in turn placed their full support behind the YAR calling the coup a "national liberation movement" rather than a "people's revolution" as it had originally been termed. A Soviet official described the Yemeni people to Sallal as "struggling selflessly for the freedom and independence of their motherland." This semantic upgrade in Yemen's status was a response to the "technical-aid agreement" concluded between the USSR and the YAR only two days earlier, and announced publicly by Sana'a radio.[71] From the Soviet perspective, it seemed that Sallal might be able to, at least temporarily, fill al-Badr's role in Yemen as an ally of the USSR.

On November 8, 1962 a Yemeni delegation traveled to Moscow and returned without an official Soviet military commitment to the YAR as the USSR was in the midst of the Cuban missile crisis prior to the Yemeni visit. Without an official guarantee from the USSR, Sallal signed a defense pact with UAR on November 10. The Soviets were initially reluctant to issue open aid package to YAR, preferring instead to "extend its long-range reconnaissance capacity." In as such, the Soviets invested in the construction of an airport near Sana'a, large enough to handle the Egyptian TU-16 bombers.[72] At the time there did not seem to be a need for a major airport in Sana'a. The Yemeni air force had been inaugurated less than one year before and there were only a minimal number of non-military flights. The Soviets had conceived the new Yemeni airport as a significant strategic asset in South Arabia,

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[71] FOIA, CIA Intelligence Weekly Summary (October 19, 1962). "Yemeni Rebel Regime Gaining Strength".

[72] Richard E. Bissell, "Soviet Use of Proxies in the Third World: The Case of Yemen," *Soviet Studies* (vol. XXX (1978), 87-106), 92.

rather than simply a service to Yemeni civilian aviation.[73] "The USSR could rest assured that they would have relatively unimpeded access to Hodeidah and Sana'a airport as long as the UAR was governing Yemen, and the UAR certainly remained the dominant force in that country."[74]

During the reign of Imam Ahmad, the USSR provided Yemen with economic and military aid, as detailed in the previous chapter. Under Sallal, however, the direct Soviet military presence in Yemen receded to an advisory role after the Egyptian army intervened. Although the weaponry continued to be supplied from Soviet sources, the Egyptian military infrastructure in Yemen acted as a middleman supplier and trainer of Yemeni troops. There remained, however, a core group of seventy-five Soviet military advisors designated to train a modern Yemeni army and modern technological specialists and thirty two Soviet advisors for economic development.[75] In March 1963, nine Soviet specialists in hydrology and agricultural specialists along with twenty doctors (fourteen to Hodeidah, four to Sana'a, and two to Ta'iz - mostly used for Soviet personnel) arrived in Hodeidah. In addition, the USSR also sent specialists and teachers in higher education. A total credit of around $60 million was granted to Yemen and the Soviets also agreed to delay the repayment of the credit for five years. During 1963 there were $9 million worth of Soviet export to Yemen (of technology, sugar, cement, soap, matches, oil products, machines, etc.) and $6 million rubles of

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[73] RGANI, Fond 5, Opis 30, Dela 452, List 4, October 3, 1963.

[74] Bissell, "Soviet Use of Proxies in the Third World," 92.

[75] RGANI, Fond 5, Opis 30, Dela 452, List 33, June 1964. Chinese road building team completed a Sana'a-Hodeidah road in January 1962.

Yemeni export to the USSR (coffee, cotton, etc.).[76] In essence, the post-coup saw a significant the expansion of Soviet-Yemeni relations.

Komer's War

The US was a latecomer to the emerging international arena in Yemen. President Kennedy and his foreign office had previously given little thought to this remote impoverished region and were perfectly content allowing a motley group oilmen and intelligence agents to represent American interests in Yemen. Ironically, it was this lack of interest in Yemen that allowed US decision makers to forestall recognition of the regime, weighing both local factors and the interests of British and Saudi allies. By the time the US was ready to recognize the regime, al-Badr was discovered alive, thereby complicating the Yemeni situation. The uncommitted position of the US in Yemen, allowed its foreign office to act as a mediator between Egyptian, Saudi, and Yemeni interests during the first months of the conflict. Peter Sommerville-Large, an Irish journalist present in Yemen during the civil war, observed that despite the official recognition of the YAR Americans were equally as popular with royalists because the tanks and military hardware used by Egyptians were all Russian, not American. He explained that "because the American did not openly help the republicans it was assumed among the Royalists that they secretly supported the Imam, and had only recognized the new regime for devious diplomatic motives."[77]

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[76] RGANI, Fond 5, Opis 30, Dela 452, List 36, June 1964. By the beginning of 1964, the Egyptians had already spent 35 million pounds sterling and had suffered five to six thousand casualties battling royalist opposition.

[77] Peter Sommerville-Large, *Tribes and Tribulations: A Journey in Republican Yemen* (London: Robert Hale, 1967), 123. When Sommerville told American Charges d'affaire Cortada that he paraded as an American journalist for his safety, Cortada responded: "We can take it…If the Royalists regard us as allies, it's all to the good – you can't have too many friends." (161)

During the Yemen civil war, decision making on the Yemeni situation was moved from the State Department to the White House. Concern regarding the possible repercussions of the Yemen civil war for US oil interests in Saudi Arabia gave this local conflict an inflated sense of importance for the Kennedy administration. Kennedy soon became so heavily engaged in forming Middle East policy that senior staff member of the National Security Council Robert W. Komer, claimed that the President was functioning as his own Secretary of State. [78]

Robert Komer collected all the information disseminated from the Saudi and Egyptian foreign offices and local intelligence relating to the Yemeni crisis. In this role, he formulated US policy with the full approval of JFK and sent the President summaries several times a week, detailing the events in Yemen and the implementation of US policy. As nearly every piece of material that came in or out of the White House relating to Yemen had Komer's RWK signature affixed to it, members of the Kennedy administration often referred to the Yemen civil war as *Komer's War*. Phillips Talbot, the Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs, gave his assessment of Komer and the extent of his influence and centrality in the Yemen civil war: "Komer is a tremendously vigorous man…He was the key man over in the White House on Middle East things. Mac Bundy, I believe, worked basically from Komer's analyses and recommendations, and these went to the President in that direction."[79] In his biography of Komer, Frank Leith Jones, explained that Komer was nicknamed "Blowtorch Bob", because his "resolute determination to have the direction of his superiors carried out was akin to having a blowtorch aimed at the seat of one's pants."[80]

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[78] Stookey, *America and the Arab States,* 1975, 183

[79] JFK Library, Talbot, Oral History 2, 10

[80] Frank Leith Jones, *Blowtorch: Robert Komer, Vietnam, and American Cold War Strategy* (Annapolis, Maryland: Naval Institute Press, 2013), 3. Komer, who later serve as LBJ's adviser

Komer himself admitted, however, that he was appointed to this position by sheer coincidence of being in the room when the conflict first broke out, having had no previous exposure or knowledge of Yemen.[81] The fact that Komer was not an expert on Yemen specifically, but was rather “more a coordinator with a special eye for Kennedy,” underscores the broader scope of the Yemen civil war in the eyes of American policy makers in the 1960s.[82] Komer’s lack of experience regarding Yemen was by no means the exception in the Kennedy administration. Kennedy was very clear from the beginning of the civil war that from the US perspective, Yemen itself was not particularly significant. Komer, in very illustrative terms, summed up how the President felt about Yemen, that is, once he was able to locate it on the map:

> “If this place was on the moon or the center of Africa and the Russians or Egyptians or other people were not involved, we couldn’t care less what went on in Yemen. It could be a head-hunter fight in the depths of New Guinea. As long as it didn’t impinge on our interests, no problem.”[83]

Although prominent American politicians did not give thought to Yemen prior to the revolution, Soviet machinations in Hodeidah were clearly noticed. US policy throughout the Yemen civil war consisted of a single word: containment. The only question was how best to prevent an escalation of the civil war that could potentially

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and head of US counterinsurgency efforts under General William Westmoreland in Vietnam, was aptly nicknamed “Blowtorch” as a description of his aggressive personality and brash self-confidence. Nonetheless, because he was such a colorful character he is often included as “a caricature, a self-important sycophant, or a person so outlandishly optimistic that he is of no importance other than to serve as comic relief or a symbol of American hubris.”

[81] JFK Library, Komer, Oral History 2, 17

[82] JFK Library, Hart, Oral History, 31

Komer’s illustrative and emotional memos eventually antagonized enough senior diplomats in the State Department that Johnson exiled him to Vietnam to work on the pacification program. (Jonathan Colman, *The Foreign Policy of Lyndon B. Johnson: The United States and the World, 1963-69* (Edinburg: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), 13.)

[83] JFK Library, Komer, Oral History 2, 9

engulf the entire region. Official American aims in Yemen were outlined by Phillips Talbot:

> 1. To keep the Yemeni conflict and its repercussions from spreading and endangering vital U.S. and Western interests in the Middle East, outside of Yemen, particularly in Saudi Arabia and Jordan.
> 2. To prevent the development by the Soviet bloc of a predominant position in Yemen.
> 3. To encourage the prospects for a relatively stable and independent Yemen.[84]

Imams Ahmad and al-Badr did not have many fans in the Kennedy administration. The CIA had become concerned by the increasing number of arms shipments and the amount of economic aid arriving in Yemeni ports from Soviets and Communist Chinese sources during the 1950s.[85] Sallal's coup, on the other hand, seemed to have genuine intentions to modernize Yemen. Robert Stookey, the U.S. *Chargés d'Affaires ad interim* to Yemen in 1962, was of the firm belief that the Yemeni imamate was "ignorant, bigoted, venal, and avaricious."[86] In a telegram to the Secretary of State's office in October 1962, Stookey justified U.S. support for the revolutionaries:

> "If ever a country needed revolution, that country is Yemen. Its new regime's stated policies we cannot possibly quarrel with. We have opportunity here [to] align ourselves only reluctantly with forces of justice, reform and progress. Let us seize it."[87]

In isolation, the new regime would have been hailed as a great achievement. The Egyptian support of the revolution, however, complicated the matter. King Saud of Saudi Arabia justifiably believed that Nasser's presence in the Gulf presented a direct

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[84] Badeau, *The American Approach,* 185

[85]JFK Library, Box 208a, Folder 2, July 1963, CIA Summary. In 1957, the Soviet Bloc introduced an economic and military aid program, supplying Yemen with heavy artillery, tanks, small arms, and aircraft. On the economic front, the Soviets built the new port in Hodeidah and began construction on the new Sana'a. The Chinese built a new highway from Hodeidah to Sana'a.

[86] Hart, *Saudi Arabia and the United States,*120

[87] JFK Library, Box 207, Folder 3, 55, October 1962, Stookey to State.

threat to the Saudi own seat of power. On October 23, 1962 Cairo Radio warned Crown Prince Faisal: "the sons of all the Arabian Peninsula lie in wait for you and your family…Faisal nothing but death awaits you".[88] Additionally, Saud voiced fears that the success of Nasser's revolution might inspire a similar Nasserist coup in Saudi Arabia, possibly orchestrated by the large Yemeni workforce in Saudi Arabia; a potential fifth column. King Hussein of Jordan was equally concerned with the stability of his own regime and feared a Nasser-supported Palestinian revolution in his own country.[89] Although the Saudi and Jordanian concerns may have been somewhat exaggerated, they managed to garner the attention of US policy makers in the Middle East.

The Soviet recognition of the YAR, followed in turn by the rest of Eastern bloc, brought the question of recognizing the YAR to the forefront of US foreign policy.[90] The potential repercussions of U.S. recognition were summarized by McGeorge Bundy, Kennedy's National Security Advisor:

> "Our immediate concern is less with what transpires inside Yemen than the prospect that our failure to recognize the new regime will lead to escalation of the conflict endangering the stability of the whole Arabian Peninsula. Likewise, failure to recognize will result in termination of an American presence in Yemen and is likely to lead to a considerable increase in Soviet influence."[91]

Saudi Deputy Foreign Minister Sayyid Umar al-Saqqaf expressed his personal concern for the repercussions of Saudi support for al-Badr to Parker Hart on October

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[88] Badeeb, *The Saudi-Egyptian Conflict,* 52. In fact, in 1963, Nasser paid some Yemeni workers to carry out acts of sabotage in Saudi Arabia that potentially threatened to undermine the Saudi regime.

[89] JFK Library, Box 207a, Folder 1, 10, November 1962, Macomber to State. In an interview with William Macomber, the U.S. Ambassador to Jordan, on November 18, 1962, King Hussein spoke his thoughts aloud: "I wonder who will be next King Saud or me!"

[90] Macro, *Yemen and the Western World,* 128

[91] JFK Library Box 207a, Folder 2, 23, February 1962, Brubek to Bundy.

25, 1962. The deposed Imam lacked both the popular and military support to bring the civil war to an end[92], and would only attract a more protracted Egyptian attack against the royalists and their Saudi backers.[93] It was unlikely that Saudi Arabia's poorly trained 15,000 troops would stand a chance against Nasser's 13,000 troops who had arrived in Yemen within one month of the coup.[94] Under these circumstances, it appeared that recognition of the YAR and a diplomatic agreement for the withdrawal of Saudi and Egyptian forces from Yemen would be instrumental in securing the Saudi regime. Saudi Arabia needed an exit strategy that would allow King Saud and his brother Faisal to withdraw from the conflict without giving the perception of being defeated by Nasser. As John Badeau recounted in his memoirs, lacking another realistic option, the Kennedy administration resigned to supporting Nasser after slightly ameliorating their perception of his communist leanings:

> "Nasser was not an ideologue. He was a highly pragmatic man indeed; he took some things from the Communist system and some things from the capitalist. At that time it was quite strongly represented in the Department that this was kind of a vaccination, if you will, against a real onslaught of a worse disease."[95]

It was determined that Nasser's support for the revolutionary state would obviate Sallal's need to turn to the Soviets.[96] Mahmoud Riad, a prominent Egyptian diplomat and Egyptian ambassador to the UN from 1962-1964, noted that "during the Yemen Crisis, the Russians did not offer any opinions, and did not bargain with us [Egypt].

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[92] *ibid.*

[93] Hart, *Saudi Arabia and the United States*, 117

[94] *Ibid*., 119. There is doubt that the Saudis even had that many battle-ready troops.

[95] Badeau, *The American Approach,* 192

[96] JFK Library, Box 207a, Folder 1, 70, November 1962, Yemen Summary.

Their main goal was to find a foothold in Yemen."[97] Riad's perspective, while certainly tinged with elements of self-interest, highlighted a disconnect between the Egyptian offensive and Soviet policy. Although continuing to give Nasser a blank check in their support of the YAR, the Soviets did not seek to control the Egyptian policy. Rather, they were waiting for the opportunity, presumably during the political instability which would follow Nasser's withdrawal from Yemen, to assume a dominant role in the YAR. Nasser "jealously guarded his clients, thereby preventing the Soviet Union from gaining any credit for their efforts" and shielding the Yemen civil war from Soviet dominance.[98]

Nasser was accepted by the US as the lesser of two evils and even as a potential obstacle to a Soviet Republic of North Yemen. While foreign offices and media outlets attempted to decipher the Egyptian rationale in Yemen, the French *La Gazette* made the observation less than two weeks after the start of the revolution that "[i]t may be that Gamal Abdel Nasser is fighting a battle at once in the vast distances of Saudi Arabia, England, and Russia".[99] While certainly not intending to fight a three-front battle, Nasser's very presence in Yemen essentially discouraged Saudi Arabia, the British in Aden, and the Soviet Union from expanding their influence over South Arabia.

Following the Cuban Missile Crisis in October 1962, neither Kennedy nor the American public had much patience for further brinkmanship in the Middle East. Both Nasser and Sallal managed to placate American foreign policy concerns by publicly announcing their intentions to adhere to the American vision for the resolution of the

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[97] Badeeb, *The Saudi-Egyptian Conflict,* 60

[98] Peterson, *The Decline of Anglo-American Middle East*, 33 and 43. This "jealousy" was symptomatic of a general suspicion that Nasser had of any Arab leader whom he thought might be trying to build his own "Arab" credentials and perhaps force unity upon Egypt.

[99] *La Gazette*. October 10, 1962.

conflict. On December 17, Sallal announced that the YAR intended to honor its international obligations and live in peace with its neighbors. The following day, Nasser, made a pledge to withdraw Egyptian troops from Yemen gradually, but only once Saudi Arabia and Jordan withdrew their own support for royalists.[100]

The December 19, 1962 US recognition of the YAR, not surprisingly, did not stabilize the conflict. Although agreeing in theory to disengage Egyptian troops from Yemen in exchange for US recognition of the new regime, in January 1963, Nasser claimed that a "token force" of 30,000 troops was necessary to ensure the stability of the new regime.[101] Jordanian officials were upset with US recognition and threatened to "reconsider the utility of dealing with Communist bloc nations…Jordan might accept Soviet aid missions as a prelude to the establishment of formal diplomatic relations with the USSR." While this scenario was unlikely, the Jordanians believed it was apparently essential to increase their 'nuisance value' to get the US to pay attention to their views.[102]

In a summary to Kennedy, Komer optimistically suggested a continuation of the current course of diplomacy: "I conclude that a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush. Advantages of trying to keep war from flaring up again in first place outweigh

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[100] Christopher McMullen, *Resolution of the Yemen Crisis, 1963: A Case Study in Mediation* (Washington DC: Institute for the Study of Diplomacy School of Foreign Service Georgetown University, 1980), 3.

[101] Mordechai Gazit, *President Kennedy's Policy Towards the Arab States and Israel: Analysis and Documents* (Tel Aviv: Shiloah Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies, 1983), 26.

[102] Badeau, *The American Approach*, 123. In addition, members of the petroleum industry, pro-Israel congressmen and lobbyists accused the US of supporting the UAR. The British Colonial Office in Aden and the Arab Gulf States were concerned by the regional consequences of a sanctioned Egyptian presence in Yemen.

those of getting out from under a faltering disengagement scheme. More preventative diplomacy just looks better than risking another blow-up."[103]

Reports of Egyptian and YAR incursions into Saudi territory and British-administered Aden Protectorate, continued to arrive at the State Department throughout the first few months of 1963,[104] threatening to spread the conflict into neighboring territories. Nasser began contingency military preparations which included placing naval units, including submarines, motor torpedo boats and destroyers in an advanced state of readiness. The UAR was also continuously moving military equipment and personnel to Yemen in preparation for air and naval attacks on towns along the Saudi Red Sea Cost and the Saudi-Yemeni border. The Egyptian airfield *Rad Banas* less than 300 miles across Red Sea from Jeddah was modified to accommodate MIGs and IL-28s. The Saudis also prepared for a military confrontation by ordering troops to Red Sea coast positions, improving anti-aircraft defenses for towns and airfields and shifting national-guard positions to southern border area.[105]

Internally, the YAR was in serious financial trouble, needing significant financial aid "until it can get house in order and begin to satisfy revolutionary promises".[106] The "house", however, was in complete disarray. A military stalemate necessitated additional Egyptian reinforcements, as Sallal's regime was not able to subdue the royalist force in the north and northeast tribal areas. The rising frequency of Egyptian

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[103] JFK Library, Box 209, Folder 2, 54a, 2, Komer to Kennedy, October 1963.

[104] JFK Library, Box 208, Folder 5, 25, February 1963, Rusk to State, Summary of UAR incursion into Saudi Arabia and Aden Federation.

[105] FOIA, Central Intelligence Weekly Review (March 15, 1963), UAR, "Saudi Arabia, and Yemen." In Yemen itself Soviet and Czech representatives surveyed Yemen's munitions needs and Egyptian and Yemeni military units pushed an offensive to regain control of Marib and Harib and territory along the Aden Federation border.

[106] JFK Library, Box 208a, Folder 1, 33, June 10, 1963, Badeau to State.

air raids on royalist strongholds had begun to foster virulent anti-Nasser sentiments among the northern tribes. It seemed reasonable to conclude that Sallal's regime could not survive without continual Egyptian military intervention. According to a CIA estimate, with a premature UAR exit the Soviets were poised to gain unrestricted access to Yemeni airfields, setting up a staging ground for communist penetration in Africa.[107] The instability of Sallal's regime cast further doubt on the ability of Yemenis to govern Yemen, leading some members of the Kennedy administration to advocate a permanent Saudi presence in Yemen as an obstacle to Soviet expansion.[108]

Despite the bleak CIA assessment, Komer, representative of the minority opinion in the administration by that point, maintained a level of tepid optimism, declaring: "I'm convinced that if we can keep the Saudis turned off and the Egyptians from being stupid, we have a controllable situation which can be gradually damped down." US policy objectives were subsequently restated as: "preventing Yemen war from spreading into full-fledged intra-Arab conflict (with risk of overt US/USSR involvement), and protecting our Saudi clients from their own folly while still not compromising our overall UAR policy".[109]

The US mission to the UN at first suggested dispatching to Yemen the Italian diplomat Pier Pasquale Spinelli, former UN representative to the Middle East in 1958. UN Secretary General U Thant rejected the request because he did not want to seem too closely aligned with the US. U Thant's Third World proclivity and predilection for nations such as UAR and YAR would continue to serve as an impediment to UN operations during the Yemeni conflict. He feared being accused by Soviets of

[107] JFK Library, Box 208a, Folder 3, 8, July 2, 1963, Sherman Kent, CIA Civil War Summary.

[108] JFK Library, Box 208a, Folder 3, 8, September 18, 1963, Jones (London) to Dept. of State.

[109] JFK Library, Box 208a, Folder 3, 23, July 2, 1963, Komer to Kennedy. After 1961, the UAR referred only to Egypt.

supporting his predecessor's (Hammarskjöld) pro-American policy. In as such, U Thant insisted that the entire Security Council (US and USSR included) agree to any UN action taken in Yemen. Following the UN refusal to act, the US then sent its own mission led by James Terry Duce, the vice president of ARAMCO and a personal friend of Saudi Crown Prince Faisal. Faisal refused to agree to a withdrawal of support for royalists, citing worries over Egyptian meddling.[110]

From February through April 1963, Ellsworth Bunker, the seasoned American mediator, and Kennedy's special emissary, dedicated an intense six weeks of "shuttle diplomacy" between Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and New York, to negotiate a disengagement settlement.[111] Diplomacy during this conflict was no easy task given the diverging Egyptian, Saudi, and Yemeni national policy goals. Nasser wanted the Saudis to cease their aid to the royalists immediately and promised a gradual withdrawal at some time thereafter. Nasser's logic in forcing the Saudis to withdraw support first was to finish off pockets of royalist resistance prior to his own withdrawal, thereby securing the YAR.[112] The Saudis demanded Nasser's simultaneous withdrawal, specifically to avoid this scenario.

Sallal, who had been consulted by UN representative Ralph Bunche, wished for the sky by asking for a complete Saudi withdrawal, the exile of the entire Hamid al-Din family from the Peninsula, firm assurance that Britain and Saudi Arabia would withdraw all "rebel" infiltrators from Yemen and recognize YAR, all which essentially amounted to winning the Yemen civil war on his behalf. In return, Sallal would not

[110] McMullen, *Resolution of the Yemen Crisis*, 7.

[111] *Ibid*, 9. Ellsworth Bunker was chosen for his experience in mediating Dutch-Indonesian West Irian dispute in 1962, rather than his Middle East qualifications. He also served in India during the 1950s and greatly improved American relations with Nehru's government.

[112] *Ibid*, 32.

intervene in Saudi Arabia or Aden.[113] Further negotiations avoided consulting with the YAR as a reaction to both Sallal's audacious requests and the Saudi protests over the unwillingness of mediators to speak with the Imam al-Badr and the royalist opposition. Bunche's meetings in Yemen had gotten off to a bad start in February 1963 when a qat-chewing crown of Yemenis began to rock his car in protest upon his entry to the city of Ta'iz.[114]

Kennedy's updated policy, outlined by National Security Memorandum 227 issued on February 27, 1963, called for a special presidential emissary to the region and the dispatch of a USAF squadron to Saudi Arabia.[115] In an effort to placate Saudi security fears, Kennedy commissioned *Operation Hard Surface*, a squadron of eight US planes stationed in Dharan, a major oil administrative center in Saudi Arabia's Eastern Province and the headquarters for ARAMCO.[116] Komer explained that the presence of the US squadron, although under strict orders not to be used in combat, was meant to send a clear message to Nasser that the US would not tolerate continued incursions into Saudi territory.[117] Although, Kennedy told Komer, "I don't want the squadron out there

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[113] *Ibid*, 17.

[114] Brian Urquhart, *Ralph Bunche: An American Life* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1993), 363.

[115] Little, "The New Frontier on the Nile", 520. Edward Weintal and Charles Bartlett, *Facing the Brink: an intimate study of crisis diplomacy* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1967), 43.

[116] JFK Library, Box 209, Folder 5, 2, Brubeck to McGeorge Bundy. February 28, 1963.

Komer claims that Kennedy originally hoped to have the planes withdrawn within 60 days (Jones, *Blowtorch*, 68).

[117] JFK Library, Box 209, Folder 5, 9, Komer to Kennedy. March 11, 1963.

Air Force Chief of Staff Curtis LeMay protested the mission as the Dharan airfield had been deactivated in April 1962. The absence of a modern airfield not only ensured the inability of the Hard Surface planes to respond to Egyptian incursions, but also made them sitting ducks for enemy fire (Weintal and Bartlett, *Facing the Brink*, 45).

until after we are 99 percent certain it won't have to be used."[118] Secretary of State Dean Rusk concurred when he told Bunker before he left to the Yemen mission: "Be sure to tell Faisal that we will not be dragged into his little war in the Yemen."[119]

During the first week of April 1963, during a meeting in Nasser's home in Manshiyat al-Bakri, Badeau and Bunker secured Nasser's commitment to gradually disengage the Egyptian military from Yemen in correspondence with a simultaneous Saudi cessation of aid to the royalists, although he insisted on leaving some remaining Egyptian "military advisors".[120] Bunker conferred the success of his diplomatic mission to U Thant, UN Secretary General, and stressed the importance of an immediate UN mission to oversee the disengagement process.[121] Having secured Nasser's commitment to the interim withdrawal agreement, Bunker flew to Riyadh where he received Faisal approval on an eight-point proposal. This included the termination of support and territorial refuge to royalist troops in exchange for UAR simultaneously withdrawal of an undetermined number of troops. The UAR would be barred from taking any punitive actions against remaining royalists as a punishment for previous resistance or UAR attacks on Saudi Arabia. A demilitarized zone of 20 km would be established

Little, "The New Frontier on the Nile". Operation Hard Surface was intended as a symbolic deterrent and was under strict orders from Kennedy to remain idle, lest the U.S. be drawn into a large-scale military confrontation with Nasser.

[118] JFK Library, Robert Komer, Third Oral History Interview, 2.

[119] Weintal and Barlett, *Facing the Brink*, 45.

Although Kennedy was not dragged into the war, Operation Hard Surface had an unintended consequence. Rumors spread by Radio Cairo claimed that American Jews were among the pilots sent to Saudi Arabia, creating a media storm and public relations issues for the administration both domestically among Jewish groups and among Arab allies abroad (Hart, *Saudi Arabia*, 195).

[120] JFK Library, Box 209, Folder 6, 74, April 3, 1963, Badeau to Dept. of Stat.

[121] JFK Library, Box 209, Folder 6, 102, April 19, 1963, Dept. of State: Bunker Mission Summary.

along the Yemen-Saudi border with impartial observers on both sides.[122] The Bunker agreements were signed on April 10 and were subsequently passed on to the UN for mediation.

Robert Komer advocated continuing the slow-moving negotiations between the Saudis and the Egyptians saying that “while they’re talking they’ll at least be less inclined to start shooting”.[123] George Ball, Kennedy’s Undersecretary of State for Economic Affairs and Averell Harriman, Kennedy’s Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs, both expressed concern that “forcing substantial UAR withdrawals would leave Yemen in chaos with Soviets waiting to fill the vacuum”.[124] In fact, in March 1963, the Soviets signed an aid agreement with the YAR worth approximately $20 million and offered the Yemenis education grants to study in Russia. [125] The Italian Minister to Yemen claimed to have counted 147 Russian personnel and Russian sponsored agricultural and industrial projects in the port city of Hodeidah.[126]

Nasser, himself, assessed that his premature departure would jeopardize Sallal’s government because 30,000 Egyptian troops alone could not completely subdue the royalist Imam supporters.[127] Even a partial reduction in the number of Egyptian troops would have been interpreted as a withdrawal of UAR support for the revolutionary, presumably shifting Yemeni support to the royalists.[128] Nasser’s adamant efforts to remain in full force in Yemen were sanctioned by US foreign policy. Kennedy still

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[122] McMullen, *Resolution of the Yemen Crisis*, 43.

[123] JFK Library, Box 208a, Folder 3, 60, August 19, 1963, Komer to Kennedy.

[124] JFK Library, Box 208a, Folder 1, 78, June 26, 1963, Ball to State.

[125] JFK Library, Box 208a, Folder 2, July 1963, CIA Summary.

[126] JFK Library, Box 208, Folder 4, 43, April 17, 1963, Cortada to State.

[127] JFK Library, Box 208a, Folder 2, 1, July 1963, CIA Summary.

[128] JFK Library, Box 208a, Folder 2, 6, July 1963, CIA Summary.

harbored visions of extending a hand in friendship to Nasser, although there were ulterior motives in keeping Nasser intensely involved in Yemen. It appears evident from the exchanges in the Kennedy administration that no one actually thought they could negotiate the withdrawal of Egyptian forces from Yemen. As will be discussed in Chapter 6, allowing Nasser to remain in full force in Yemen was in fact the underlying rationale behind US policy in Yemen. Not only would the Yemeni conflict be confined to Yemen, but Nasser's army and activities would be confined to Yemen as well, preventing him from undertaking concerted military effort elsewhere in the region.

Robert Komer eloquently described Nasser's plight in Yemen from the US perspective:

> "Nasser is trapped in Yemen. It's bleeding him, but he can't afford either the sharp loss of face in letting go or the risk of confronting us by starting on the Saudis again…On top of this, Nasser has deep economic trouble at home, and now an open fight with the British. Nasser cornered is a dangerous animal, and we want to be mighty careful how we handle him."[129]

Komer's assessment of the Egyptian economy was not entirely accurate. In 1963, Egypt was still in the midst of a five-year plan for rapid modernization.[130] The cost of the Yemen civil war and the foreign service pay for 70,000 soldiers certainly contributed to the growing Egyptian deficit during a period that saw an increase in Egyptian GDP and overall higher living standards. Nonetheless, Yemen was only one of multiple aggressive Nasserite policies which included agricultural and industrial

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[129] JFK Library, Box 209, Folder 1, 23, September 20, 1963, Komer Yemen Summary.

[130] Bent Hansen, *The Political Economy of Poverty, Equity, and Growth: Egypt and Turkey* (Washington DC: Oxford University Press, 1991). Hansen is the best resource on Nasser's economic reform during the 1960s.

expansion, a massive propaganda machine, and an expansive social welfare network.[131] Komer's expertise as an economist aside, he explained his optimism about eventual resolving the Yemen crisis: "Let them all bleed to death. Egyptian are having their forces bogged down, Saudis are spending their money, and the Yemenis are suffering. When worn out, they will finally reach a settlement."[132]

Conclusion

During the fog-of-war that characterized the first weeks of the Yemeni conflict, information was at a premium. Sallal's capture of the radio station allowed him to recover from his initial blunder of letting al-Badr escape Sana'a alive. Sallal and Baydani proceeded to parade an international charade claiming al-Badr's death and the imminent victory of the Yemeni republican forces. Nasser and Khrushchev wasted little time in recognizing the YAR, assuming that their stalwart ally was dead. The Saudis cited treaty agreements, tribal politics, Arabian *sharaf*, and strategic advantages in declaring their support for the Hamid al-Din family that showed up at their border. Al-Badr's miraculous resurrection and the momentum of the royalist opposition movement, however, turned a domestic succession crisis into a global conflict. Saudi and Jordanian alarm at Nasser's intentions and their own domestic instability drew the US into the conflict as the mediator intent on pleasing all parties involved.

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[131] Tom Little, *Modern Egypt* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1968), 266.

[132] Mohsin A. Alaini, *Fifty Years in Shifting Sands: Personal Experience in the Building of a Modern State in Yemen* (Beirut, Lebanon: Dar An-Nahar, 2004), 83.

Chapter 4: Local Hostilities and International Diplomacy

During the first two and a half years of the conflict, Nasser followed military success with an appeal for international diplomacy and a ceasefire to secure the gains made by republican and Egyptian forces. Significant efforts were made by the US and UN over that period to bring the UAR and Saudi Arabia to a diplomatic agreement and a withdrawal from Yemen. Imam al-Badr and the royalists, on the other hand, were not recognized as a state and not included in international diplomatic negotiations. As a non-state entity, the royalist tribal armies were able to continue military operations unabated and without fear of international sanctions or retribution. Appeals to international diplomacy were followed by royalist counter-offensives that rolled back many of the YAR territorial gains and imperiled the sustainability of Sallal's regime. Nasser's ultimate about-face and refusal to withdrawal Egyptian troops according to international agreements at each juncture, was a response to the reality of the battle-field rather than a premeditated diplomatic ploy to buy time for his troops.[1] This depiction of events in Yemen runs counter to the narrative of the civil war from American, British, and UN perspectives, which accused Nasser of manipulating international parties with false promises of withdrawal.[2] This chapter utilizes captured Egyptian military manuals from 1964 detailing the formation of strategy and deployment of forces from 1962 through the end of 1964.

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[1] Dana Adams Schmidt, *Yemen: The Unknown War* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1968), 210. Schmidt claims that Nasser suffered political and military embarrassment prior to the 1964 conference and was not prepared to withdraw.

[2] The British saw Nasser's presence as an epic Anglo-Egyptian battle and could not believe that Nasser's commitments to withdrawal were sincere (Karl Pieragostini, *Britain, Aden, and South Arabia: Abandoning Empire* (Hampshire: Macmillan, 1991)). The anti-Nasser lobbyist and politicians in America depicted Nasser as benefitting from a policy of appeasement, receiving American aid while continuing hostilities and making a mockery of diplomatic efforts (Alan R. Taylor, *The Superpowers and the Middle East*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1991). The perception at the end of UNYOM was uniformly negative with von Horn's diatribe as an example) Carl von Horn. *Soldiering for Peace*. David McKay Company: New York, 1966)

The internationalization of the local Yemeni conflict was not limited to the military alone. Bruce Condé, an American philatelist and longtime friend of al-Badr led his own "stamp war" against Nasser and the YAR, bringing recognition and triumph to royalist forces through the popularity of the royalist postal network. Richard John, historian of the American postal system explains that beyond the ordinary functions of transferring information and commerce, the postal system has the ability to foster a unified national society out of a loose union of confederate states.[3] The royalist postal network provided al-Badr's non-state tribal alliance with a unifying national organization and international legitimacy.

Mutual Limitations and the First Weeks of the War

The first Egyptian soldiers to arrive in Yemen in October 1962 landed at the Red Sea port of Hodeidah with no maps, no previous military experience in mountainous terrain, and no understanding of the tribal opposition to the republic. What Nasser did understand was that without Egyptian help the YAR army and tribal supporters of the republic would not even be able to secure the capital city for longer than a few weeks.

On their arrival, the Egyptians validated the rumors of the decrepit state of Imam Ahmad's weapons supplies and armed forces. Yemen's navy consisted of only two motor boats in Hodeidah. A reported fifty Yemeni cadets were training in Italy as paratroopers or pilots, but at that point had not graduated into regular service in the Yemeni army. Imam Ahmad had ordered the dismantling of the few Yemeni planes that had been shipped, and stored the various parts in caves around Sana'a.[4] The

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[3] Richard R. John, *Spreading the News: The American Postal System from Franklin to Morse* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998).

[4] Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center (ITIC), Imam's Forces, 25. Egyptian servicemen found sixteen rusting Ilyushin-10 planes left out in the open and six Ilyushin-14 planes which were in serviceable condition. Once repaired and reconstructed, these were used for domestic transport. Four additional planes were found in Ta'iz, repaired by Egyptian technicians and used for reconnaissance.

airports in Sana'a, Hodeidah, Ta'iz, and Sa'dah were little more than dirt runways and in need of serious modernization.[5]



Fig. 4.1 Map of North and South Yemen.[6]

Fearing they would be used against him, Imam Ahmad had ordered artillery shells hidden in practically inaccessible large caves on the top of Jabal Nuqum, the tallest mountain near Sana'a. The only transfer options available were via camel, which could carry only two cases of ammunition on two round trips maximum per day down the mountain.[7] Had the Egyptian not arrived with munitions, this would have been the

[5] ITIC, Yemen Aerial, 56. The military airport in Sana'a had a 1,000 meter runway and was 7,200 meters above sea level. The civilian airport in Sana'a was 1,200 meters long and 7,200 meters above sea level. The Hodeidah civilian airfield had an 800 meter runway and was at sea level. The Ta'iz civilian airport had an 800 meter runway and was 4,000 meters above sea level.

[6] www.thearabdigest.com

[7] ITIC, Artillery Lessons, 11. The caves around Sana'a are, to current date, still inaccessible and are deemed a restricted military zone.

only method, albeit laborious and time consuming, to arm the republic's armored units consisting of 31 tanks and 95 armored vehicles, which had already used much of their ammunition in the shelling of Imam al-Badr's palace. Egyptian technicians were equally surprised to discover that the spare parts for artillery pieces in Sana'a were stored in a warehouse 250 kilometers away in Ta'iz. Large-scale UAR efforts were underway to locate, document, and repair these artillery pieces into working condition. Chief of Staff of the Egyptian Army, Field Marshall Muhammad 'Abd al-Hakim Amer, founded artillery schools in Sana'a and Hodeidah to train Yemeni soldiers in artillery, as the majority of the YAR army had little experience with such weaponry. The Yemeni army was deemed antiquated and far behind the rest of the Arab world needing significant Egyptian military aid, with the eventual goal of transferring security responsibilities to a modernized Yemeni republican military.[8]

During the first phase of the war, urban areas were the focus of republican and Egyptian attention for multiple reasons. The Free Yemeni Movement and the 1962 coup were fomented and supported by a largely urban population. Rural and village areas, on the other hand, tended to associate more readily with the religiously conservative allegiance to the Imam. Cities in Yemen were built on mountaintops with outer houses built of stone with slots for firing, a defensive asset to Egyptian forces holding the city. Large villages and cities were by nature located near significant sources of drinking water, of utmost importance to the increasing size of the Egyptian military presence. In order to secure an urban network, road engineering projects were needed to connect the cities and villages and prepare them for motorized military transport, as most of the roads in Yemen were then only capable of supporting animal

[8] ITIC, Artillery Lessons, 10. David Mitty likens the Egyptian program of transferring military and security responsibility over to Yemeni republicans to the American program of Vietnamization. (David M. Mitty, "A Regular Army in Counterinsurgency Operations: Egypt in North Yemen, 1962-1967," *The Journal of Military History* 65 (2001), 415).

transport.[9] The three cities of Sana'a, Hodeidah, and Ta'iz constituted the "strategic triangle" at the crux of Egyptian military control and Sallal's political and economic strength. All other offensive and defensive strategies were centered on the security of this triangle and the defense and maintenance of its interconnection road network.

Battle for Sa'dah

The republican forces entered the first weeks of the revolution with a clear military plan in what would amount to a race against the clock until Imam al-Badr was able to gather a sufficiently organized tribal opposition to Sallal. The northern cities of Sa'dah and Hajjah were traditionally the epicenters of the Imam's support during times of political crisis. Following the 1948 and 1955 coups, the Imam and his supporters established a strategic base in the Hajjah fortress and from there led a tribal army in an attack on the capital city of Sana'a. Given the importance of these two cities to the counterrevolutionary movement, they became one of the first and most important targets of the first republican offensives and were essential to garnering early support for the YAR.

With two weeks of the coup, Prince Hassan had already captured Sa'dah, Ma'rib, and other centers in al-Jawf. Following numerous royalist military triumphs, additional tribes announced their opposition to the republic and their allegiance to the Imam. Hassan continued moving his troops southwards, preparing for an attack on Sana'a and on the republican ruling apparatus. The Egyptian intervention, and the arrival of aerial support for republican troops turned the tide of the battle, stemming the royalist

[9] ITIC, Yemen Overview, 13-15. Although Yemen was the most fertile region in the Arabian Peninsula, the country was nonetheless covered with large swaths of desert and limited water resources.

According to Anwar al-Qadi, the commander of the Egyptian forces in Yemen, the terrain in Yemen was so difficult, that distance was measured in hours rather than in kilometers. (Yael Vered, *Hafikhah u-milḥamah be-Teman*) (Tel Aviv: Am 'oved, 1967), 63).

advance on the capital.[10] The most representative battle for the military significance of the Egyptian army occurred in Sa'dah in the second half of October 1962.



Fig. 4.2 A view of the fortified city of Sa'dah with its surrounding hills.

At the end of October 1962, a unit of Egyptian paratroopers arrived in Sa'dah to establish an airfield and secure roads for Egyptian troop movements to the northern city. Part of the 18th Egyptian paratrooper brigade arrived in Sa'dah without incident and established an Egyptian base in Sa'dah. On the way back towards Sana'a to link up with Egyptian ground troops, the paratroopers were ambushed by tribesmen from the Hashid federation and were forced to return to the safety Sa'dah. Within days, tribal militias loyal to the Imamate placed a siege around the Egyptians in the city. Paratroopers, aided by Sa'dah locals who had declared their support for the YAR, aided the Egyptians in pushing back numerous royalist attacks on the city.[11]

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[10] Yael Vered, *Hafikhah u-milḥamah be-Teman* (*Coup and War in Yemen*) (Tel Aviv : Am 'oved, 1967), 54-58.

[11] ITIC, Battlefield: Sa'dah, 38. It is not surprising that the city's residents would have been willing to support the Egyptian paratroopers. There may have been fear that tribal soldiers would have sacked the city of Sa'dah as was traditionally done to Sana'a following the defeat

On November 8, 1962, the rest of the 18th paratrooper brigade arrived from the coast to reinforce the Egyptian position in Sa'dah. Royalist forces, however, took control of the main roads preventing reinforcements from reaching the city and concentrated artillery fire on the Sa'dah airport in an attempt to cut off Egyptian air supply as well. The royalist coordination and tactics were more organized than the paratroopers had anticipated causing one Egyptian officer to claim: "The enemy's tactics were based on sound military reasoning; evidence of foreign leadership behind it, planning its missions, providing it with funds, weapons, ammunition personnel, and specialists."[12]

On November 27, the 18th brigade, supported by an Egyptian armored division that arrived from Sana'a, launched an offensive to retake the main road into Sa'dah and break the siege. The brigade was split into four groups equipped with three-ton trucks carrying 37mm cannons and 1.5-ton trucks equipped with machine guns. The first group secured two shoulders of the main road in a nighttime raid that relied on heavy fire from 82mm mortars. The group's progress was halted when they found four barriers 200-300 meters apart with rows of anti-tank spikes in between. Engineers attempted to disable the barriers, but when one armored 4x4 vehicle exploded from a roadside bomb, the air force was called in to strafe the road and destroy the barriers. By the afternoon, the group managed to secure a hilltop fortress overlooking the city, the furthest this Egyptian offensive would progress. The second group was forced to halt midway in the evening of November 28, in the face of heavy fire from the royalist-held pass of al-Amasiya, manned by 500 tribesmen armed with guns, cannons, mortars, and 75mm recoilless rifles. Heavy Egyptian artillery fire forced tribesmen to retreat

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of a coup. These fears would have been exacerbated had a number of residents indeed declared for the republic either through bribery or political force.

[12] ITIC, Battlefield: Sa'dah, 39. In reality, foreign mercenaries did not arrive in Yemen until many weeks later.

from their position to the nearby mountains for refuge. Egyptian troops made the error of chasing tribesmen into the mountains and were ambushed, suffering very heavy losses. Egyptian commanders again blamed losses on foreigners serving the Imam, claiming to have found dead foreign soldiers, foreign papers, gold liras, and foreign currency; evidently proof that foreigners were behind royalist success.[13] They were not willing to believe that Yemeni commoners could outdo the Egyptian army.

The third and fourth groups were sent to subdue the estimated 1,500 royalist forces guarding the al-San'ara pass, a winding and narrow road that was the only approach to the city of Sa'dah from the south. As the Egyptian scouts approached the pass, they came under heavy fire cutting off their wireless connection with the rest of the brigade. A second scouting unit was sent and suffered heavy casualties, losing several armored vehicles in the process. Unable to establish a wireless connection with the two frontline scout units, the Egyptian officers were, in an act of great fortune, able to make contact with the besieged paratroopers in Sa'dah, who described the location and strength of the tribesmen from behind enemy lines. With this timely positioning information, Egyptians bombarded enemy positions with artillery fire, forcing them to retreat and open the pass.[14] With the al-San'ara pass open, Egyptian heavy artillery was transported to frontline positions, overwhelming the southern remnants of the Sa'dah siege and delivering a blow to the royalist attempt at securing a northern capital. On the morning of November 30, UAR troops entered Sa'dah and established a defensive perimeter.[15]

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[13] ITIC, Battlefield: Sa'dah, 40.

[14] ITIC, Battlefield: Sa'dah, 41.

[15] ITIC, Battlefield: Sa'dah, 42. Egyptian estimates claimed that three hundred royalists were killed with only six Egyptian casualties. Accurate statistics from the Yemen War are difficult to ascertain. See Ferris, Jesse, *Nasser's Gamble* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013) for an overview of memoirs of Egyptian officers and soldiers serving in Yemen and their own

The battle of Sa'dah ended in a virtual stalemate. Egyptian troops held a garrison in the city itself and on an overlooking hilltop, if only for a few weeks. Royalist tribesmen held several other overlooking hills, with neither side able to drive the other from their defensive positions. At this early stage in the war, the royalist tribes were able to confront the Egyptian army directly in the battlefield as both sides had access to heavy artillery and munitions. For the Egyptian army, it became clear that success on the battlefield in Yemen was contingent upon their ability to amass a greater advantage in munitions and to utilize air cover as often as possible. The lessons learned in the Sa'dah battlefield would factor into a more concentrated Egyptian attack as part of the Ramadan Offensive in 1963.

From the perspective of the US and Western European nations, the initial gains made by republican and Egyptian forces were sufficient to recognize the new Yemeni republic on December 19, 1962, as it seemed that the YAR was in control of the majority of the country with the exception of a few border areas. Following US recognition, British Prime Minister Macmillan likened President Kennedy's interaction with Nasser to Neville Chamberlain's "I have Herr Hitler's word" dupe. Nasser agreed in theory to disengage Egyptian troops from Yemen in exchange for US recognition of the new regime, yet in January 1963, Nasser claimed that 30,000 troops were necessary to ensure the stability of the new regime.[16] Although Nasser was accused of deluding the US with promises of withdrawal, a simple analysis of the map of Yemen in the beginning of December 1962, may have led Nasser to conclude that the civil war was indeed over and that the YAR could survive without heavy Egyptian military presence.

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casualty estimates ranging anywhere from 10,000 to 60,000 with an undetermined number of maimed or injured.

[16] Mordechai Gazit, *President Kennedy's Policy Toward the Arab States and Israel: Analysis and Documents* (Tel Aviv: Shiloah Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies, Tel Aviv University, 1983), 26.

The strength and organization of al-Badr's opposition was, however, greatly underestimated.

Royalist Counteroffensive: December 1962-January 1963

The main Hamid al-Din royalist generals were uncles and first cousins to al-Badr. Hussein, one of former Imam Yahya's sons had six sons of his own: Muhammad, Abdullah, Hassan, Ahmad, Ali and Yahya, all referred to as "al-Hussein". Abdullah, who was a third year student at the American University of Beirut (AUB) in 1962, led battle in Jawf. His brothers Ahmad, who trained in an Egyptian military school, and Ali, who was studying political science in AUB and later drafted al-Badr's constitution, were killed in action. Hassan, another son of Imam Yahya, who had assumed the role of Imam in al-Badr's absence had two sons of his own: Abdullah and Hassan, both taking leadership roles in the royalist army.[17] Prince Hassam, al-Badr's uncle controlled the royalist army in Yemen's northeast, while al-Badr himself controlled the other half in Yemen's northwestern regions. The hereditary Slave Guards of the Royal Household, supposed descendants of Christian Ethiopians who were cut off from retreat across the Red Sea after the failed 5th and 6th Century occupation of Yemen, were the most trustworthy supporters of Imam. They were all in charge of the "Royal Motor Pool" and transporting supplies and soldiers to front lines.[18]

Two battles marked a shift in the momentum of the battlefield in the Imam's favor from the end of 1962 through the beginning of 1963. In Sirwah, located twenty-five miles west of Ma'rib, royalist eyewitnesses describe the slaughter of the 180-man

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[17] Schmidt, *Yemen: The Unknown War*, 64.

[18] Bruce Condé, "Odd Battle Of Stamp Orders Punctuates Conflict In Yemen, Philately Safe After Close Call," *Linn's Weekly Stamp News*, January 18, 1965, 16. Condé added that the "Royal Motor Pool" also carried the mail. Bruce Condé, an American philatelist serving as a military commander in Yemen published many of his observations during the 1960s in *Linn's Weekly Stamp News*, for which he served as a Middle East correspondent.

Egyptian parachute jump (three planes of sixty each) near the Sirwah battlefield. Many paratroopers missed their mark entirely while others were shot in midair by royalist tribesmen on the ground.[19] In Arhab, twenty miles north of Sana'a, twelve Egyptian tanks advanced against the royalist lines of communication in Arhab. The Egyptian armor units did not protect their tanks with accompanying infantry, leaving the tanks' blind-side open to attack. Royalist tribal Arhabi volunteers approached the unguarded tanks and physically overturned them with tree trunk levers, burning them and the soldiers inside. The accompanying soldiers fled in terror back to Sana'a, cutting the assault short.[20] The royalist offensive demonstrated to Nasser that the war was far from over.

In some instances, Turkish era cannons were brought out of storage in a last ditch efforts to repel an Egyptian offensive. Shaharah, a large mountaintop village in the northern district of 'Amran, was the location of an early clash with Egyptian soldiers. The hilltop town was armed only with Turkish era weaponry captured by Imam Yahya after destroying a Turkish army of 15,000 led by General Faidhi Pasha in 1926. The 1904 Turkish large field gun known as "al-Bisbas" ("The Pepper") had a large supply of Turkish shells stored in the village. Al-Bisbas was brought out of retirement to repel an Egyptian attack in December 1962. Observers remarked on the historical significance of using a Turkish-era gun against a modern enemy: "The Turks were the best soldiers in the world, and the Egyptians are about the worst."[21] Foreign observers

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[19] Schmidt, *The Unknown War*, 65.

[20] Bruce Condé, "Free Yemen POD Carries On, Resumes Operations In West, North and East As Loyalists Repel Rebels In These Areas," *Linn's Weekly Stamp News*, April 1, 1963, 26. British MP McLean was witness to these royalist victories leading him to conclude that recognition of YAR would be premature.

[21] Bruce Condé, "Free Yemen's First Definitives In Pictorial Theme Appear In Perf, Imperf, and Sheet Form," *Linn's Weekly Stamp News*, June 15, 1964, 13.

described Egyptians as "inept, and helpless to cope with guerilla mountain warfare conditions, suffering losses of ten to one man-to-man infantry engagements."[22]

Egyptian Strategy and the Ramadan Offensive

In order to raise the moral of Egyptian troops fighting in Yemen, Nasser and Amer offered higher compensation for service and the ability to purchase products through the tariff-free Aden port and transport them to their families in Egypt duty-free. Soldiers and officers returning from Yemen would often bring refrigerators, gas ranges, and televisions along with them. Upon returning, those soldiers who had served in Yemen would be given privileged positions in the government for themselves and their relatives.[23] New hotels, upscale accommodations, and grandiose shopping centers were constructed in Hodeidah to accommodate Egyptian officers.[24] Nasser claimed on numerous occasions to have received letters from military officers, requesting a transfer to Yemen, purportedly "for the sake of fighting for Arab nationalism in Yemen."[25]

Chief of Staff of the Egyptian Army, Field Marshall 'Abd al-Hakim Amer, envisioned Yemen as his own "military fiefdom" away from Nasser's oversight in

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[22] Schmidt, *Yemen: The Unknown War*, 130.

[23]Ali Abdel Rahman Rahmy, *The Egyptian Policy in the Arab World: Intervention in Yemen 1962-1967 Case Study* (Washington DC: University Press of America, 1983), 246-247. Salah al-Din Al-Hadidi, *Shahid 'ala Harb al-Yaman* (al-Qāhirah : Maktabat Madbūlī, 1984), 55-56. Many of these items were later sold on the black market in Egypt and were a source of financial corruption as detailed in Ferris, *Nasser's Gamble*, 199-205.

[24] Yael Vered, *Hafikhah u-milḥamah be-Teman* (Tel Aviv: Am 'oved, 1967), 142.

[25] Gamal Abdel Nasser, *Speeches and Press-Interviews*, January-December 1963, 126, Address by President Gamal Abdel Nasser on the Occasion of the 11th Anniversary of the Revolution at the Republican Square, Cairo, July 22, 1963 and 164, Address by President Gamal Abdel Nasser on the 11th Anniversary of the Revolution at Alexandria, July 26, 1963. It seems more likely that these letters, which were passed along to Amer, served as evidence for the role that the Yemen battlefield played in Nasser's patronage network.

Egypt.[26] Service in Yemen among senior officers became a rite of passage to higher echelons in the Egyptian government. Anwar Sadat, President of Egypt from 1970-1981, was a central planner of the Egyptian occupation of Yemen from the first days of the republic through his connections with Baydani. Hosni Mubarak, President of Egypt from 1981-2011, headed an air force squadron with troop transport and long-range bombing responsibilities in Yemen. Omar Suleiman, Mubarak's short-lived vice president in 2011, also served as a senior officer during the Yemen civil war. General Anwar al-Qadi, the Director of Operations during the 1967 War, first commanded Egyptian forces in Yemen from October 1962 through November 1963 and was instrumental in conceiving the Ramadan Offensive.[27] Al-Qadi had originally envisioned a five-year mission to Yemen intended to secure the revolution and create a stable Yemeni national army.[28]

Over a two month period, from February through March 1963, the Egyptian army began to construct a counter-guerilla strategy, through trial and error, aimed at securing the strategic urban triangle of Sana'a, Ta'iz, and Hodeidah. In what was known as the Ramadan Offensive, the Egyptian army increased the troop numbers to over 30,000 and embarked on a bold offensive campaign to regain areas ceded to the Imam in the previous weeks. Royalist positions were to be pushed further north and east of the triangle, specifically targeting the Imam's supply lines and mountainous strongholds. The tactics, supply-lines, and overwhelming artillery and aerial power made the Ramadan Offensive the most successful of the Egyptian occupation and a model for international counterinsurgency operations.

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[26] Andrew McGregor, *A Military History of Modern Egypt: From the Ottoman Conquest to the Ramadan War* (Westport, CT: Praeger Security International, 2006), 261. McGregor explains Amer's personal fief: "loyalty to the commander came to outweigh success on the battlefield".

[27] Mitty, "A Regular Army in Counterinsurgency Operations," 417.

[28] Hofstadter, *Egypt & Nasser*, 189-90.

The first examples of this battle strategy occurred in al-Jawf, a neighboring region northwest of Sana'a. Al-Jawf had traditionally been a refuge for mercenaries and brigands and in December 1962 became a source of munitions for royalist troops. UAR troops centralized in al-Hamidah, a village north of Sana'a in preparation for an attack on al-Jawf with three battalions and one armored unit. The first attempt at conquering the al-Fajra pass into the al-Jawf region was a disaster, as the secondary forces lost their way. Subsequent over-flights pinpointed the enemy location and the night was spent bombarding the enemy by air and with heavy artillery. The next morning tanks and troops with flamethrowers followed behind to extract enemy troops from cave hideouts. The Egyptian offensive continued south of al-Jawf, conquering the city of Ma'rib as well, intimidating local tribes into submission with a display of heavy artillery along the way. In the process the Imam's army learned quickly the degree of inadequacy in their artillery pieces. [29]

Part of the Egyptian strategy involved deceiving royalist units into exposing their hidden location. For example, Egyptians soldiers lit fires two kilometers from a royalist mountain outpost near Ma'rib and shined lights as if there was a full assault on their position from that direction. The royalist unit began feverishly firing their cannons and mortars in the direction of the oncoming "assault", thereby divulging the location of their artillery and subjecting themselves to subsequent Egyptian bombardment. In the capture of al-Hazm, the capital of Jawf, the Egyptians even managed a successful 1,000-man parachute drop to capture the city in February 1963.[30]

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[29] ITIC, Battlefield: Jawf, 44. The Egyptian offensive was a response to enemy attacks on roads leading from Sana'a to Ta'iz and the coastal city of Zabid under the pretext of cutting supplies in preparation for an attack on Sana'a.

[30] Bruce Condé, "Loyalist Yemen Mail Continues; Operations Through Territory Held By Invaders To Reach Free World At Post Of Aden," *Linn's Weekly Stamp News*, June 10, 1963, 1.

This successful parachute mission was vastly different in organization and scale than the failed Sirwah mission only a few weeks earlier.

Even with the advantage of aerial reconnaissance, pinpointing the exact location of these outposts was difficult. As a result, Egyptian artillery teams were instructed to excessively bomb a wide area with long range artillery and smoke grenades.[31] Collateral damage was not a consideration and was often the secondary intention of such heavy bombing under the assumption that this would have a demoralizing effect on the local tribal population. In order to avoid excessive transport over unfriendly terrain, the Egyptian army adopted a policy of decentralization of arms depots in order to insure supply and independence of action by local commanders.[32]



Fig. 4.3

While large-scale bombing certainly had a demoralizing effect on enemy troops, the real and tangible utility of the artillery fire was actually hitting the target. The key, according to the Egyptian strategy was to draw premature fire from royalist positions, noting the coordinates, and communicating the positions to supporting aircraft and artillery positions. In February 1963, for example, Egyptian intelligence received word that the Imam’s forces had received shipments of 75mm cannons and mortars to Arhab in preparation for an assault on a major Sana’a corridor. Two companies of paratroopers armed with sizeable artillery units were sent to verify the approximate

[31] ITIC, Artillery Lessons, 3.

[32] ITIC, Artillery Lessons, 4.

location and destroy the enemy position. During the first night, a small group of scouts detached two headlights from a truck, attached them to batteries, and placed the lights in a wooden box half a mile from the approximate enemy base. The scout group, standing under cover a fare distance from the headlights, flashed them on and off intermittently, giving the impression that there was an approaching vehicle. Surprised to see the vehicle, the enemy bombed the area of the "vehicle", revealing to Egyptians a count of at least four 81 mm mortars and one cannon. When the royalists sent a patrol party to investigate, the Egyptians quickly left the area having noted the approximate location of the artillery.

The following night, scouts planted four diversionary sets of vehicle headlights light as they had the previous nights. This time, however, four armored vehicles, with headlights off, were to approach from a different direction. A second group established position one mile from Arhab with two 120mm mortars that had a maximum range of 7200 meters. Once the location was reestablished using the headlight deception tactic, Egyptian artillery bombarded the royalist artillery location and the four armored cars approach Arhab with their lights off. As enemy fire began to subside, perhaps after one or two artillery units were damaged, Egyptian 120mm mortars began firing beyond the enemy position, giving the impression that they were missing the location while also covering the movement of the four vehicles. Assuming it was safe to emerge momentarily, the royalist artillery unit exposed themselves and were captured or killed by the armored vehicles that had by that point reached the royalist defensive position in Arhab.[33]

This developing strategy of heavy artillery was not without its difficulties and inadequacies. Moving the artillery between stations was a challenge and there was a

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[33] ITIC, Airborne Troops, 25-27.

preference for artillery with greater range, albeit inferior accuracy. Heavy artillery, for instance, would often get stuck in the road to Sa'dah where the 25mm cannons needed to be pulled by rope. Even when the Egyptians were able to move the cannons along the road, the shaking was so incredible that it would cause damage to the artillery pieces. The forward progress of artillery shipment was therefore limited to 6-9mph, leaving the slow-moving units vulnerable to sniper fire and ambush. The 120mm mortar could only ride on the back of a truck for this reason. At least half the artillery movement was dependent upon air travel and trucks, increasing the expense and difficulty of transport, especially when considering the difficult terrain.[34]

Tribal collaborators of the republic could not be counted on to support Egyptian military plans. Although local tribes were given bribes in exchange for their continued allegiance to the republic and small arms in exchange for their military service, few of tribesmen or arms ever made it onto the battlefield, and when they did were disorganized and hardly considered an asset.[35] Tribal sheikhs and militia preferred to hoard the weapons for their own use and under their own terms of engagement. For example, during a February 1963 campaign to uproot a royalist position along the Sana'a-Hodeidah road, a group of 1,000 Hashid tribesmen under the command of Sheikh Abdullah al-Ahmar, along with the 35 Egyptian soldiers were given the responsibility of capturing an outpost on Jabal Masur. Even after aerial bombardment and artillery fire on the position for an entire week, the republican tribesmen were reluctant to attack the weakened royalist position. Rather than follow the Egyptian-led battle plan, they were more interested in attacking one house at a time and pillaging the

[34] ITIC, Artillery Lessons, 5. Digging ditches to protect the artillery was also a challenge in the rocky mountainside and the army engineers opted instead to pile sand bags and rocks for protection, further increasing the need for transport. Given the makeshift bunkers for artillery pieces, they would often break upon firing and required extra maintenance.

[35] ITIC, Artillery Lessons, 7.

local population. The UAR army was forced to assume the sole responsibility of reconquering Jabal Masur and its environs.[36]

While royalists paid tribesmen $1 per day of fighting, the Egyptians expended a great deal more to secure the tenuous alliances with profiteering sheikhs who often collect bribes from both sides. One tribe was reported to have collected $2 million from Egyptian authorities for their military assistance, yet "before every battle sent messages assuring the Imam they would shoot to miss." An Egyptian officer was quoted as complaining that "we can never trust the Yemenis who come to fight on our side…[t]hey're always likely to turn their fire suddenly against us."[37]

Patrick Seale, a correspondent for *The New Republic* shared a description of the tribal stance towards the war that helps explain the difference between tribal loyalties to the Imam and those to Egypt:

> "Whereas the Egyptian seem uncertain why they are there, the Yemeni tribes are...enjoying opportunities for loot on a scale probably unparalleled since the incense caravans of Sheba. I met a man who had acquired 80 Egyptian blankets; another had a couple of hundred cans of excellent Egyptian beans; children were dressed in rags of parachute silk and every royalist camp was littered with captured weapons, bazooka bombs, boxes of grenades and Egyptian cigarettes."[38]

While Yemen's mountainous terrain was an obstacle for the Egyptian army of heavy transport, it was an asset for the Imam's army who spread themselves thin in hidden outposts situated strategically in caves along the side of the transport arteries. Stone barrier 50-70 centimeters wide were constructed in circular form on mountaintops or as a straight wall in open fields surrounding pits that were dug to avoid shrapnel.[39] The

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[36] ITIC, Battlefield: Sana'a-Hodeidah, 53

[37] George de Carvalho, "Yemen's Desert Fox," *Life Magazine*, February 19, 1965, 103.

[38] Patrick Seale, "The War in Yemen," *The New Republic*, January 26, 1963.

[39] ITIC, Artillery Lessons, 8.

royalists moved the artillery pieces and cannons out of hidden locations and caves only for a short period of time to fire and then hid them away again, moving the weaponry freely from place to place making them very hard to target with direct Egyptian fire.[40] The UAR planned nightly sporadic bombardments with incendiary munitions, phosphorous shells, and flare launchers to frighten locals, draw groups of fighters from hiding, and deprive enemy troops of rest before a major confrontation.[41]

The indiscriminant use of artillery shells and the transport needs of the Egyptian army required endless shipping and transport of munitions and fuel from bases 1,200 miles away in Egypt. The main port of entry for the country was in Hodeidah where large cranes, storage facilities, and a capacity of 4,500 tons of fuel were used continuously by the Egyptian military. Two to three weekly shipments carrying 3,000-8,000 tons of supplies set out from al-Adabiya port in Egypt port to Hodeidah. Aerial transport by Ukrainian Antonov planes carrying five-seven tons (aside from weight of fuel) arrived in Yemen twice a day in addition to periodic Ilyushin-14 shipments. Once unloaded at the port or the airport, a large number of trucks and pack animals carried the supplies to area north and east of Hodeidah and Sana'a. Supplies were delivered to inaccessible areas by helicopters, parachute, or small aircraft. During the first year of the war, eighteen Egyptian vessels (aside from fuel tankers) conducted 122 shipments with an average of 2.34 per week.

The Hodeidah port entrance could accommodate only one ship at a time while the pier had room for four small ships or three medium-sized ships with a separate area for fuel shipment. The Hodeidah port had three cranes with a five ton capacity. Smaller 25-30 ton ships carried supplies from the larger vessels to the smaller ports north of

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[40] ITIC, Artillery Lessons, 9.

[41] ITIC, Artillery Lessons, 12.

Hodeidah. Truck deliveries from Hodeidah to Sana'a consisted of forty trucks operating on a three day cycle - two day for a roundtrip and one day rest and repair. Forty trucks, carrying forty-five tons average over thirty days translates into an average of 50,000 tons per month being transported from Hodeidah to Sana'a. Twenty three-ton trucks made daily trips to other secondary outposts from Hodeidah in the same manner.[42]

Heavy use of Red Sea transport necessitated a sizeable navy to patrol the 1,200 nautical miles from the al-Adabiya Egyptian naval base to Hodeidah port and the 200 nautical miles of YAR coastline from Bab al-Mandeb northwards. Naval responsibilities included patrolling shipping lanes, monitoring coastal security in Yemen, particularly in the north where royalists tried running supplies along the shore, and maintaining a security perimeter around the Hodeidah port. In essence, the Egyptian position in Yemen extended the Suez Canal security zone over 1,200 miles south to the Gulf of Aden. Large number of patrols around port area and up and down Red Sea coast and the required naval escort for each military and commercial vessel constituted a substantial number of ships in the Hodeidah port. The Hodeidah port, however, had a limited capacity of three large ships, thus creating long lines of military and civilian ships. [43] The Hodeidah radar base monitored approaching aircraft and coordinated sea traffic. Major hydrographic surveys of the Yemeni coastline provided the first modern detailed maps and of sea lanes along the Red Sea coast, thereby

[42] ITIC, Overview, 30-39. Although the 1962 port was never intended for large-scale military shipments, the 1958 Hodeidah-Sana'a road and the existing port facilities were sufficient for Egyptian military purposes.

[43] ITIC, Naval Forces, 73. The large number of ships in and around the Hodeidah port ironically created an added layer of difficulty for enemy forces to discern the Egyptian military vessels from the neutral commercial ones.

facilitating smaller-scale naval operations in the ports of Al-Mokha, Midi in Hajjah province, and al-Luhayyah.[44]

Importance of Air Force

Most UAR missions used Russian MiGs out of airfield initially based in Hodeidah and then moved to Sana'a by 1964. Russian-manufactured Tupolev Tu-16 bombers flew 1,200 miles from bases in Egypt to bomb buildings and fortifications ahead of UAR offensives. Several Ilyushin-28 jet bomber aircraft stationed in a small airport nine miles north of Sa'dah with a 1.5 mile runway, but were forced to relocate to Hodeidah because of constant danger of attack near Sa'dah. The Egyptian air force dropped time bombs, as the delayed detonation frightened the locals who understood this only as random explosions without planes in vicinity.[45] Taking further advantage of the tribal unfamiliarity with planes, Egyptians equipped twelve Yak-11 single engine planes with the standard four rockets and two additional .303 caliber machine guns. Tribesmen would count the rockets and unknowingly assume the danger had passed after the fourth bomb was dropped. The planes would then make a second turn strafing the enemy tribesmen who had come out to inspect the damage with a barrage of gunfire significantly increasing the effectiveness of air raids in Yemen.[46]

Antonov An-12 four-engine transport aircraft served as an "aerial bridge" between Egypt and Yemen. The planes originally shipped to the Sana'a civilian airport before shifting direction and transporting supplies directly to the Sa'dah airport. Given the tenacity of the intense fighting in the Sa'dah region, the airport would need to be "reconquered" every night in order to secure the landing strip for morning shipments.

[44] ITIC, Naval Forces, 74.

[45] ITIC, Yemen Aerial, 58. The time bombs also facilitated multiple rounds of over flights unobstructed by premature explosions on the ground.

[46] ITIC, Yemen Aerial, 57.

The fuel supply in Sa'dah was low and the Antonovs were required to carry their own refuel supplies for roundtrip flight from Aswan, in order not to deplete the local supply in Sa'dah.[47]

During the first months of the war, four temporary airport facilitates and seven heliports were constructed. Given the dearth of proper maps and unfamiliarity with the terrain, pilots were reliant on navigational equipment and radio communication. In order to accommodate the increasing number of aircraft in Yemen, a massive effort was undertaken to pave new runways and light them to facilitate use in day and night and even after rain storm. In addition to the main airports in Sana'a, Hodeidah, Ta'iz, and Sa'dah, eight additional airports of smaller size were placed strategically within range of contentious fronts. Helicopters with 12.7mm machine guns were stationed at each landing strip and airport and proved decisive on many battlefronts. The air force launched a campaign to map and survey the Yemeni terrain using single-engine Yakovlev (Yak) and Ilyushin-14 planes. A meteorological station was established near Hodeidah to predict flying conditions and a combination of radar and outlook points were erected to monitor the air border.[48]

Following the battlefield successes of the Ramadan Offensive, Nasser agreed to the Bunker agreements in April 1964, only to see most of the YAR gains lost during Saudi-aided royalist offensives in the subsequent months, forcing Nasser to maintain troop levels despite the commitments to the US and UN. Lieutenant General Anwar al-Qadi approached Nasser in May 1963 after seeing many of the territorial gains of the Ramadan Offensive lost during the royalist counterattack and recommended that Egypt

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[47] ITIC, Yemen aerial, 59.

[48] ITIC, Yemen aerial, 63-67.

withdraw from Yemen.[49] Nasser dismissed the suggestion and al-Qadi did not have much of a chance to respond for in the end of 1963 he was injured during an ambush on his convoy in northeast Yemen and was evacuated to Egypt for treatment.[50] General ‘Abd al-Muhsin Kamil Murtaji took over for al-Qadi in Yemen and would later command the Sinai front during the 1967 War.

Modified Royalist Tactics and the 1964 Hunt for al-Badr

The Egyptian army was trained to fight in an open desert war with Israel, rather than a mountainous guerilla war with an elusive enemy. Heavy artillery and aerial bombardment may have scattered the enemy, but upon Egyptian withdrawal, royalist forces would emerge from hiding and retake the lost territory.[51] The Ramadan Offensive forced the royalist tribesmen to modify their tactics, particularly in mountainous regions, and avoid structured military assaults against an enemy with far superior aerial and artillery firepower. The Imam’s army preferred to cut Egyptian communications and ambush convoys, saving frontal assaults for advantageous terrain and superior numbers.

The base in Qarah was named Camp Mansur and the “Free Yemen Loyalists” (royalist) armies were named “Mansur Armies”, which matched al-Badr’s adopted title of “al-Mansur Billlah” (Victorious Through God). From Camp Mansur, al-Badr communicated with troops on the frontlines through coded radio messages from his bomb-proof bunkers.[52] The tribesmen’s diet had been conditioned to subsist on barley and raisins for extended periods of time. Many of them were trained as snipers and

[49] Sadat, Anwar, *In Search of Identity: an Autobiography* (New York: Harper Row, 1978), 162.

[50] Mitty, “A Regular Army in Counterinsurgency Operations,” 415.

[51] Mitty, “A Regular Army in Counterinsurgency Operations,” 418.

[52] Bruce Condé, "Loyalist Yemen Salutes Flight Of Mariner 4 With Release Of Overprints On Astronaut Issue," *Linn's Weekly Stamp News*, January 3, 1966, 22.

marksmen and preferred small arms to heavy artillery.[53] Farm-boy tribal volunteers learned to use Degtyarev-Shpagin 12.7mm Soviet anti-aircraft (50-calibre) machine guns either captured from massacred Egyptian forces, bought from republican soldiers, or received as gifts from “defector elite units of Sallal’s ‘National Guard’.”[54] Yemeni tribal-sharpshooters were rumored to have “picked off fifty Egyptians with fifty rationed bullets in a single day.”[55] They were stationed in small groups of six, occupying outposts along the road and communicated by lighting bonfires, drumming sounds, or gunfire.[56] Their small units, meager rations, and light munitions needs allowed royalist commanders to maintain a mobile and barely discernible armed force with the ability to inflict heavy casualties on Egyptian armed forces. The impact of aerial bombing on royalist positions was not as potent as the Egyptians might have intended. Given the disperse nature of the royalist base and their ability to hide in a vast network of mountainous caves, made the Imam’s tribesmen difficult targets for the UAR air force. For example, the Egyptian bombing of al-Qarah in the Jawf region, never came closer than one kilometer of hitting the Imam’s base and cave, despite dropping a reported sixty-five bombs. Royalist witnesses claimed the total damage was only “one stray dog killed and one farm wall knocked down”. The inaccuracy of Egyptian bombing campaigns can be attributed to the 3,000 feet altitude practiced by

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[53] ITIC, Enemy Weapons, 28. The two main routes of infiltration from Saudi Arabia and the southern Federation of South Arabia led directly into Yemeni boarder villages, which became royalist bases and targets for the Egyptian air force. Supplies from the northern border with Saudi Arabia came directly to the regions of Amara and Wadi Amlach (about 50 miles from Sa’dah). Supplies from the eastern border with the tribe of Bayhan led to the southern Harib region, three miles from the border.

[54] Bruce Condé, "Free Yemen's First Definitives In Pictorial Theme Appear In Perf, Imperf, and Sheet Form," *Linn's Weekly Stamp News*, June 15, 1964, 13. These have replaced the .50 caliber American machine guns received before UNYOM. Their bullets could penetrate armor of Russian Ilyushins and MiGs, posing a threat to low flying planes

[55] Schmidt, *Yemen: The Unknown War*, 159.

[56] ITIC, Enemy Tactics, 27.

most planes, for fear of anti-aircraft ground fire. Royalists have derisively referred to the Egyptian bombing raids as the "milk-run" daily.[57]

As the Egyptians began to secure urban areas and the road networks connecting them, al-Badr envisioned a strategy that would place a virtual siege on every republican-held city. Al-Badr planned to starve the inhabitants into submission by attacking road shipments into and out of the city and conquering agricultural region that had acted as a vital supply of food for urban dwellers. In June 1963, following the Imam's conquest of the Wadi Dahr grape-growing region to the north-northwest of Sana'a under Prince Yahya al-Hussein (5th army), there was a shortage of raisins and almonds which "rank[ed] next to sorghum as Yemenite food staples." Jabal al-Loz (the "Almond Mountain") and the surrounding almond-growing region directly east of Sana'a had long been held by Prince Abdullah al-Hassan, further exacerbating the food shortage in Sana'a and elsewhere. In addition, Egyptian bombing in royalist areas had destroyed dwellings, crops, orchards, herds, and flocks by machine gun fire and incendiary bombs resulting in a widespread loss of food supplies in a country that scarcely has enough for basic nutrition. Imam al-Badr's Yemen was not a UN recognized country and was therefore not eligible for food aid, relying instead on their own hoarded supplies, a camel caravan trail from Saudi Arabia and proceeds from stamp sales and elsewhere to purchase food.[58] The YAR, on the other hand, was eligible for US PL-480 wheat sales and became further reliant on the UAR and the USSR for their daily sustenance.

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[57] Bruce Condé, "Free Yemen's First Definitives In Pictorial Theme Appear In Perf, Imperf, and Sheet Form," *Linn's Weekly Stamp News*, June 15, 1964, 12.

[58] Bruce Condé, "Story Of Free Yemen's FFH Set In Tragedy of 'Chickens That Stay At Home To Roost'," *Linn's Weekly Stamp News*, October 14, 1963, 29.

Haradh Offensive

The royalist offensives in early 1964 forced the retreat of republican positions to the extent that the vital Sana'a-Hodeidah road was cut off, besieging the capital city. Although heavy Egyptian military expenditure opened the road in March 1964, periodic royalist ambushes threatened supply lines. As the situation grew more desperate, Nasser made his first impromptu visit to Yemen on April 23, 1964 announcing an increase in the size of the Egyptian garrison to over 36,000 in preparation for a massive offensive in the summer.[59]

On August 14, 1964, Nasser launched a determined push on the Imam's base in al-Qarah with a massive bombing campaign emanating from the new al-Rahaba airport in Sana'a. The Egyptian pincer movement on al-Qarah consisted of troops moving south from Sa'dah and north from Sana'a and converging on the Imam's stronghold. Merjan bin Yasser, a member of the "Royal Motorized Pool" drove Imam al-Badr in his Dodge "Power Wagon" to the furthest northern point on Harad-Mushaf front where the Imam proceeded on foot to al-Mushaf. From there al-Badr split his force of 1,500 tribesmen, sending to the Harad front to join Royal Guards and half northeast Jabal Razih. Al-Badr managed to hold back the Egyptian advance until the end of UNYOM on September 4, after which supplies began to cross the Saudi border once again. By the end of September, tribal soldiers were rearmed and sent into battle moving to within thirty mile west of Sana'a. Tribal levies (14,000 in total) claimed to have massacred Sallal's troops, destroyed twenty Soviet tanks, twenty armored cars, shot down three planes and sent six hundred wounded Egyptian soldiers packing for Port Said.[60]

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[59] O'Ballance, Edgar, *The War in the Yemen* (Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Books, 1971), 129-130.

[60] Bruce Condé, "Odd Battle Of Stamp Orders Punctuates Conflict In Yemen, Philately Safe After Close Call," *Linn's Weekly Stamp News*, February 1, 1965, 36.

Aside from hunting al-Badr, Egyptian and republican forces endeavored to close the border with Saudi Arabia. The main pass from Saudi Arabia into royalist territory was through the Ma'jaz pass flanked on either side by the mountains of Jabal Razih and Jabal Sha'ar. The Egyptian offensive targeted each mountain stronghold separately before taking control of the pass. The unique part of the offensive was that republican soldiers constituted the majority of the soldiers for one of the first times since the first days of the Yemeni civil war.[61]



Fig. 4.4 The Haradh Offenssive, 1964

Following the summer Haradh offensive of 1964 Nasser was again willing to compromise and call for a ceasefire. Although al-Badr remained at large, royalist forces had been pushed back to the border with Saudi Arabia and Nasser approached King Faisal during the Arab Summit in September proposing a ceasefire and a resolution to the Yemeni conflict. The failure of the subsequent 1964 conferences for

[61] Vered, Yael, *Hafikhah u-milḥamah be-Teman* (Tel Aviv : Am 'Oved, 1967), 198.

reconciliation had as much to do with subsequent royalist offenses as it did with international pressure on Nasser to remain in Yemen, which will be addressed in the next chapters.

Postal Wars in Yemen

Beyond the military maneuvers, guerilla tactics, and counterinsurgency strategies, battles between Nasser and Imam al-Badr were being waged through other non-traditional means. Radio Cairo and the "Voice of the Arabs" radio program had by far the farthest reach and greatest impact on local population, Arabs across the Middle East, and global listeners.[62] Attempts by Saudi Arabia and Israel to broadcast their own radio programs paled in comparison with Nasser's propaganda initiatives. Admittedly, it was difficult to top a radio program that featured famed Egyptian singer Umm Kulthum, even if it was followed by Nasser's propaganda speeches. Thousands of free radios were given to Yemeni locals, along with medical care from army doctors, education from Egyptian teachers, and improvements in infrastructure in an attempt to win the "hearts and minds" of Yemeni civilians. In May 1963, a soccer match between Egyptian pilots and the marines in a sports facility in Ta'iz was open to Yemeni spectators at great fanfare.[63] The next month, Egyptian authorities founded a cultural center with activities that included chess, checkers, and other hobbies.[64] Although there are no available statistics on how many Yemenis took up chess or other hobbies

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[62] Meir Ossad, "Legal Aspects of the Egyptian Intervention in Yemen," *Israel Law Review* 5, (1970), 225 – international law prohibits the use of radio waves to incite the population of another state to violence according to the 1936 International Convention Concerning the Use of Broadcasting in the Cause of Peace," (League of Nations) to which the Egyptians were party. The "Voice of Arabs" radio program was in constant violation of this convention even before the September 1962 coup when it called for revolution in Yemen (December 29, 1961) and an overthrow of the Imam (April 26, 1962).

[63] AVPRF, Fond 585, Opis 15, Papka 8, Dela 9, File 39, May 30, 1963.

[64] AVPRF, Fond 585, Opis 16, Papka 9, Dela 5, File 51, June 8, 1963.

in the cultural center, the available program, which included several lectures a week, gave Yemenis a leisure venue to escape from their nationalist problems and the dangerous security situation.

What received less attention, however, were the “stamp wars” waged between Imam al-Badr and the Sallal-Nasser alliance. Stamps were not merely a source of income for al-Badr’s Mutawakkilite Kingdom of Yemen, but were a source of legitimacy and pride for an opposition movement that received very little global recognition.[65] In the eyes of the philatelic stamp-collecting community, al-Badr’s royalist Yemen was legitimate, heroic, and worthy of their admiration. Nor were stamp collectors the only Westerners to become enamored by the royalist cause. American and European media depicted Imam al-Badr and his northern tribesmen as romanticized anti-imperialists fighting for their country’s independence. Photographs, interviews, and press feeds from the northern highlands of Yemen were popular fodder for the Western news media, owing both to the royalist lobbyists and supporters and to the human interest stories of the “simple” farmer taking up arms against the Egyptian invaders. While many Yemeni princes became avid stamp enthusiasts during the 1960s, al-Badr’s stamp victory against Nasser and the YAR can be attributed mainly to the role played by Bruce Condé: the first and presumably only American to have aspired to be the Yemeni Cultural Minister and Postmaster General.

Born in California in 1913, Bruce Chalmers Condé served in the US Army counterintelligence service during WWII and studied Arabic at the American University of Beirut on a ‘GI Bill’ scholarship. One of Condé’s greatest passions in life was collecting stamps, particularly from Middle Eastern countries. He became

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[65] Edward B. Proud, *The Postal History of Aden & Somaliland Protectorate* (East Sussex, UK: Proud-Bailey Co., 2004). The British colonial authorities in Aden oversaw an additional set of postal stamps dating from the mid-19th Century.

obsessed with Yemen after reading the travelogues of the Lebanese Arab-American Ameen Rihani.[66] In the 1940s, Condé became a pen pal to none other than Prince al-Badr who was himself a philatelist. In 1953, at the invitation of al-Badr, Condé moved to Sana'a and started a business exporting Yemeni stamps abroad to collectors. In 1958, he converted to Islam and changed his name to Abdul Rahman Condé and gave up his American citizenship. In 1960, however, he fell out of favor with Imam Ahmad and the Yemeni Ministry of Communications, was accused of being a spy and expelled from the country as a stateless citizen. Condé then settled in Beirut and was hired as a Middle East correspondent for *Linn's Weekly Stamp News* where he would work for the next two decades sharing detailed description of events unfolding in Yemen. When his old pen pal al-Badr was overthrown, he saw this as an opportunity to find favor with the Hamid al-Din family once again, and made the trip to Najran to meet up with the Yemeni princes and their tribal army.[67]

Condé would eventually rise to the rank of General in the Imam's army and acquired the official title of "Adviser to the Ministry of Communications of the Mutawakkilite Kingdom." He served as a guide and host for American and British officials, reporters, or tourists visiting the royalist frontline. David Holden, the Middle East correspondent for *The Guardian*, observed that Condé was "an ardent Yemenophile seeking, it seemed, to ingratiate himself with the Government by acting as their self-appointed public relations man…He was an odd and slightly pathetic figure, somewhat out of both his time and his depth…he seemed to belong nowhere, and to be yearning

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[66] "L'affaire «Moslem Today», en 1953 - Bruce Condé, un personnage énigmatique," *L'Hebdo Magazine*, March 29, 2013.

[67] Schmidt, *Yemen the Unknown War*, 127-129. Condé communicates with the magazine through several sheets of paper, because typewriter was destroyed during airing in transit between Ma'rib and al-Jawf. (Bruce Condé, "Free Yemen PO Carries On, Resumes Operations In West, North and East As Loyalists Repel Rebels In These Areas," *Linn's Weekly Stamp News*, April 15, 1963, 15.

romantically for the impossible…"[68] Popular media in America referred to him as the American version of Lawrence of Arabia, who dreamed of "worldwide control for Yemeni stamps." Condé would often meet with foreigners while dressed in traditional Yemeni dress, trying his utmost to look and act native. The *New York Herald Tribune* wrote of Condé: "He may not be Peter O'Toole, but his situation is melodramatic enough to throw, say, Malcolm X or Cassius Clay into transports of jealousy."[69]

To add to his already mystifying persona, Condé adopted multiple aliases such Alfonso Yorba, Hajji Abdurrahman and General Bruce Alfonso de Bourbon, and Prince of Condé, claiming that he was a direct descendent of French royalty. Following Imam al-Badr into exile in 1970, Condé would settle in Spain and later Tangiers, Morocco where he adopted Alexis Dolgorouky, an alleged prince and author of a controversial and fanciful book, *Moi Petit-Arriere-Fils du Tsar*. Condé had married Alexis' mother, an equally outlandish royalist pretender who adopted the name Princess Olga Beatrice Nikolaevna Romanovskaya Dolgoroukaya, Princess of the Ukraine, daughter of king of Ukraine and great granddaughter to Nicholas II of Russia.[70]

"The philatelic sideline war," as Bruce Condé referred to the competitive publication of stamps by the Imam's Mutawakkilite Kingdom of Yemen and the YAR, would become his obsession and according to Condé, his only source of sanity in the midst of a depressing battlefield. The printed stamps themselves were a manifestation of local

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[68] David Holden, *Farewell to Arabia* (New York: Walker and Company, 1966), 83-83.

[69] Bill Richardson, "New Lawrence of Arabia Gallops into Yemen War," *New York Herald Tribune,* June 9, 1964.

[70] Alan Rush, "Obituary: Bruce Condé," *The Independent*, August 5, 1992.

religious and political identity and an appeal to international organizations and countries for aid and recognition.[71]

The value listed on Condé's stamps is in *buqsha*, where 40 *buqshas* make one of the Imam-era riyals. Amongst royalist tribes, the Imadi riyal (from Imam Yahya's reign), the Ahmadi riyal (from Imam Ahmad's reign), and the silver Maria Theresa Dollar were used interchangeably. The YAR introduced the "Yemeni riyal" worth an equivalent amount of 40 *buqshas* as part of a broader effort to modernize the economy.[72] The Egyptian occupation forces exhibited a large degree of control over the issuance of currency, replacing the state emblem of arms used under the Imam with the Egyptian emblem of Saladin's eagle.[73] This emblem was used on the first paper currency issued in the YAR in February 1964, as part of the broader effort to replace the Imam-era currency with a republican alternative. The new bank notes, printed in Egypt, were received reluctantly by republican merchants, yet were completely worthless among royalists who believed the notes would be useless after the republic's defeat.[74]

[71] Yemen was by no means the exception in terms of postal significance in the Middle East. Stamps were used as propaganda in the Arab-Israeli conflict as well (Harvey D. Wolinetz, *Arabic Philatelic Propaganda Against the State of Israel* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: LithoCrafters, 1975).

[72] Peter Symes, Murray Hanewich and Keith Street, *The Bank Notes of Yemen* (Canberra (Symes, Hanewich and Street 1997: The Authors, 1997), 13.

[73] *Ibid*, 16-17. After 1965, the second set of YAR state emblems differed from the Egyptian version of Saladin's eagle.

[74] *Ibid*, 21. The Egyptians introduced paper notes for three reasons: The Imam-era silver coins were subject to the fluctuation of the world silver market and would often be sold for more than the currency's value. Coinage was heavy to transport and impractical in a modern economy. Lastly, by exchanging paper bank notes with silver coins, the Egyptians could then use silver riyals to bribe local tribal sheikhs during the civil war.

The proliferation of slogans such as “Loyalist Free Yemen” [75] and “Free Yemen for God, Imam and Country” figured prominently in Mutawakkilite stamps in a self-identification of the divine-right of the Imam’s Yemen.[76] Condé described the “romance of the Free Yemen mails,” travelling to the war zone in Yemen from Jeddah by truck where it was in danger of land mines in the desert, enemy helicopters and Yak fighters, or being captured by an airborne and armored columns raiding party.[77] Most of the mail passing through royalist territory was stamped with the phrase: “Delayed in transit through enemy lines.”[78] The imagery used on the stamp was also a criticism of the Egyptian occupation as seen below in the “Tank” set of royalist stamps.[79] The capture of an Egyptian T-34 in the Jawf battlefield located 117 miles northeast of Sana’a and the halting of Egyptian forces 75 miles short of Field Marshal ‘Abd al-Hakim Amr’s goal of reaching the Najran frontier, was the inspiration for the “Tank” stamp.[80]

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[75] Bruce Condé, " 'Free Yemen' Overprints Are First Philatelic Varieties To Come Out Of Latest Revolution," *Linn's Weekly Stamp News*, December 24, 1962, 10.

[76] Bruce Condé, "Free Yemeni Mail Continues; Operations Through Territory Held By Red Backed Invaders," *Linn's Weekly Stamp News*, June 17, 1963, 16.

[77] Bruce Condé, "Free Yemen POD Carries On, Resumes Operations In West, North and East As Loyalists Repel Rebels In These Areas," *Linn's Weekly Stamp News*, April 1, 1963, 26.

[78] Bruce Condé, "Free Yemen's Red Cross Set Has Rough Sledding, Consular Stamp Overprinted As Airmail," *Linn's Weekly Stamp News*, April 6, 1964, 39. The article has a photo of Condé’s letter to his editor Carl P. Rueth of Linn’s Weekly. The letter is stamped by Mutawakkilite Kingdom of Yemen with an additional sword logo saying: “Delayed in transit through enemy lines.” The letter’s other stamps include Royal Mail, Jawf, and the ‘Uqd Red Cross hospital.

[79] Bruce Condé, "Free Yemen's First Definitives In Pictorial Theme Appear In Perf, Imperf, and Sheet Form," *Linn's Weekly Stamp News*, June 8, 1964, 14. The inscription on the bottom of the “Tank” stamp in Arabic and English: “The Free Mutawakkilite Kingdom of Yemen Fights Egyptian Imperialist *Agression*.” The word aggression is misspelled with only one “g”, perhaps a testament to Condé’s poor editorial skills while working from a dimly lit cave in Yemen.

[80] Bruce Condé, "Free Yemen's First Definitives In Pictorial Theme Appear In Perf, Imperf, and Sheet Form," *Linn's Weekly Stamp News*, June 15, 1964, 29.

Imam al-Badr retained the red flag of the Mutawakkilite Kingdom, decorated with a sword and five stars representing the five natural geographical divisions of Yemen, the five pillars of Islam and the five daily prayers. The republican flag, on the other hand, was a copy of the UAR version, with red, black and white stripes, albeit with only one star in the middle rather than two. The flag design was another demonstration of the profound Egyptian influence on state formation and identity in the YAR.[81]

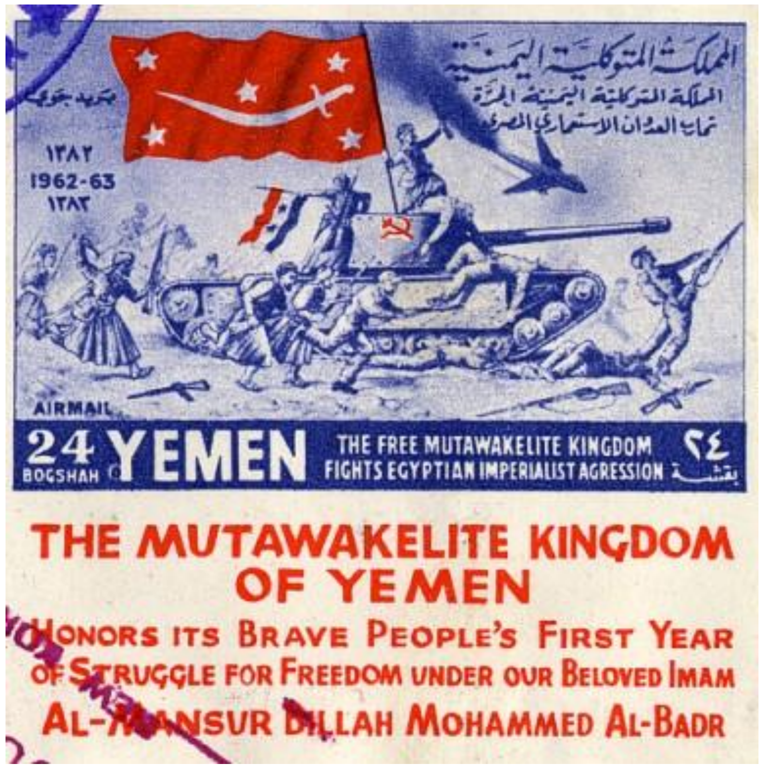


Fig. 4.5 The two-star UAR flag is shown being torn down by a royalist soldier while another raises the Free Yemen battle flag over the turret, from which is hanging the body of one of the tank crew. Other dead crew members are on and beside the T-34 tank with the Soviet sickle and hammer on the turret, while an Egyptian infantryman is falling to the right of the tank and another is being pursued and bayonetted beside it. On the ground are Soviet Kalashnikov sub-machine gun and overhead is a Soviet plane is falling in flames.

Condé criticized the many typographical and factual errors in the YAR-issued stamps and deemed them mere copies of Egyptian nationalist stamps. The YAR

[81] Yael Vered, *Hafikhah u-milḥamah be-Teman* (Tel Aviv : Am 'Oved, 1967), 41.

"Freedom from Hunger" stamps, for instance, were close duplicates of Egyptian design, having only changed the country name, indicative of the political reality. According to Condé, "the virtual 'carbon copying' of Cairo by the Sallal regime in Yemen, philatelically as well as politically, has long been one of the charges leveled against the YAR by Yemenites loyal to the Imam."[82] When royalists "liberate" towns and provinces from UAR, they cease using YAR stamps and convert all mail to Mutawakkilite stamps.[83]



Fig. 4.6 Egyptian Freedom from Hunger stamps issued in 1963 and labeled with "UAR"



Fig. 4.7 Yemeni versions of the Freedom from Hunger stamps issued in 1963 as well. The "YAR" and the monetary value constituting the only difference between the two sets.

[82] Bruce Condé, "Story Of Free Yemen's FFH Set In Tragedy of 'Chickens That Stay At Home To Roost'," *Linn's Weekly Stamp News*, October 14, 1963, 28.

[83] Bruce Condé, "YAR 'Sallal Coup' Commem Set Includes Map Errors And Soldier Now Back With Imam," *Linn's Weekly Stamp News*, November 15, 1965, 78. The Hashid tribe's ex-paramount sheikh (northwest of Sana) Abdullah al-Ahmar was exiled in April 1965 by other tribal members after having taken advantage of the 1962 coup to take revenge on Imam Ahmad and the Hamid al-Din. Prince Hassan al-Hassan, al-Badr's cousin, moved to the al-Qaflah district, the capital of the Hashid confederacy, and issued decrees confiscating al-Ahmar's property and estates, labeling him an outlawed rebel.

In reality, YAR stamp production was more robust and predictably supplied than the Mutawakkilite alternative. Although most of the YAR stamps were Yemeni versions of the Egyptian original, some of the stamps issued also served as a reflection of national identity and the achievements of the new Yemeni republic. For example some 1963 stamps commemorated the founding of the republic and some 1964 stamps celebrated the opening of spinning and weaving factories and the international airport in Sana'a. In addition to annual commemorations of the revolution, the YAR also used its stamps to appeal to the international community by memorializing President Kennedy and celebrating Soviet space travel achievements.[84] While the variety and number of stamps issued by the YAR and accepted by the international community was significantly larger than those printed by Condé and his Mutawakkilite postal team, greater attention and fanfare was given to the royalist stamps as they were designed and distributed by the romanticized cave outposts of northern Yemen. Condé took personal initiative to popularize the royalist stamps, utilizing his network of connections in the Middle East, Europe, and the US and acting as a self-appointed philatelic lobbyist. In addition to dozens of philatelic articles, Condé sent collectors copies of the royalist stamps to many locations including for example Poul Juel Jensen, Denmark's ambassador to Iraq and to Condé's friends in the International Red Cross, with both taking a favorable stance to the royalist cause.[85]

Condé described the Yemeni battlefield as a war over stamp sovereignty, implying that Egyptian military figures were specifically targeting his stamp project and that the Imam was sincerely interested in securing strategic postal areas. For example, Condé

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[84] *Yemen Stamp and Postal Stationary Index*, accessed on February 25, 2014, http://www.ohmygosh.on.ca/stamps/yemen/ryemen.htm.

[85] Andreas Abitz, "A Bundle of Historic Letters Tells Yemen's History," *Gibbons Stamp Monthly*, September 2009, 71-75.

described the Imam's capture of the republican post office towns of Barat and Hajjah and stocks of republican stamps in June 1963 as part of the Imam's "*philatelic war*" against the YAR.[86] Condé convinced top royalist military commanders to take responsibility for local postal service, a sign that at least some top royalists took Condé's postal effort very seriously. For example, Sayed Muhammad al-Daylami one of the Imam's officers, was appointed as the first army postmaster. Prince Abdullah al-Hassan, who served as UN delegate 1955-62, knew English well and processed foreign mail for the second army.[87] Condé's efforts to recruit the support of top officials were not limited to Yemeni royalists. Members of the Saudi Royal family, in addition to being supporters of the Imam's war against Nasser, were also avid stamp collectors. Saudi King Faisal's son, Prince Muhammad, for example, was both a gun collector and a stamp enthusiast. He developed a close working relationship with Condé and was instrumental in facilitating the transit of Mutawakkilite post through Jeddah. As an act of appreciation, he gave Condé a German Mauser pistol as a gift.[88]

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[86] Bruce Condé, "Story Of Free Yemen's FFH Set In Tragedy of 'Chickens That Stay At Home To Roost'," *Linn's Weekly Stamp News*, October 14, 1963, 29.

[87] Bruce Condé, "Free Yemen Philatelic Report; FAO Set In Use Throughout Area, War Progress Detailed," *Linn's Weekly Stamp News*, November 11, 1963, 39.

[88] Bruce Condé, "Free Yemen's Red Cross Set Has Rough Sledding, Consular Stamp Overprinted As Airmail," *Linn's Weekly Stamp News*, April 20, 1964, 41.



Fig 4.8 Bruce Condé (on left) standing next to Tony "Abu Yusef" Mu'awwad, his postal assistant, who is holding the Mauser pistol given to Condé as a gift. (*Linn's Weekly Stamp News*, February 1, 1965, 36)

Condé used the stamps to express appreciation to international organizations that had come to the aid of the Imam's supporters. In December 1964, the Imam signed off on a set of stamps honoring the Swiss Red Cross and its northern field hospital in Uqd.[89] The Uqd hospital, run by Dr. J. de Puoz, was equipped with a "hermetically-sealed pre-fab operating room", well-stocked pharmacy, diet kitchen, a mess for staff including its own radio station for contact with Jeddah and beyond and a staff working on three month shifts. Dr. de Puoz himself was also a stamp collector and developed a friendly relationship with Condé and his assistant Said Ismail al-Daylami, procuring

[89] Bruce Condé, "Loyal Forces Keep Freedom Fire Blazing In Free Yemen; Red Cross Set Late But Is Issued," *Linn's Weekly Stamp News*, December 21, 1964, 6. Delegate General of the Swiss Red Cross and hospital *André Rochat*, was reported to have been delighted with issue of Swiss Hospital stamps.

Yemeni collectable stamps from them. Condé occasionally shared with the staff a meal of "soup, salad with mayonnaise, meat, vegetables, fresh baked bread and butter, and dessert plus fruit, washed down with soft drinks and followed by cheese and crackers and coffee," or what "amounted to manna from heaven, as we had been subsisting on boiled mutton, flaps of Arab bread, and a sort of sorghum mush called 'harish'." It turned out that, not only was Dr. de Puoz a stamp collector, but nearly the entire Swiss hospital staff were avid philatelists who developed an interest in the royalist stamp collections.[90]



Fig. 4.9 and 4.10 Bruce Conde standing in front of IRC hospital in 'Uqd (1964)

A second set of stamps "Honouring British Red Cross Surgical Team, 1963-64," expressed an appreciation to Doctor Bartlett (American working with the British),

[90] Bruce Condé, "Loyal Forces Keep Freedom Fire Blazing In Free Yemen; Red Cross Set Late But Is Issued," *Linn's Weekly Stamp News*, January 4, 1965, 35.

Doctor Wilson-Pepper and Field Officer Arnold Plummer (40 year male veteran nurse for Red Cross) who treated wounded royalists only twenty-five miles from Sana. This presence so close to Sana'a demonstrated to the Red Cross the extent to which the royalist armies had the ability to challenge the YAR. The presence of the Red Cross in the royalist camp was no small achievement, especially when considering the threats issued by YAR vice president Lieutenant-General Hassan al-'Amri to bomb the Red Cross location, because he claimed that "anyone opposing the Yemen Arab Republic was a criminal and had no right to medical attention." He specifically threatened members of the Red Cross, saying: "If you establish any kind of hospital or medical attention in the rebel zone, I shall personally order you to be executed." The UAR occupation zone commander Lieutenant-General 'Abd al-Majid Kamal Murtaji, understood the Geneva Convention and personally assured Red Cross that they would not be bombed.[91]

The Red Cross hospital in Uqd served an important role in the health of the surrounding tribal population. In the winter of 1964, for example, teams of doctors traveled to the surrounding areas treating the wounded and teaching general principles of hygiene and first aid. According to their testimonies, local Yemenis regarded them with great respect, assuming that they had some religiously divined power. According to some accounts, locals brought transistors and other car parts to the hospital, assuming that those who could repair a human-being could surely repair a car as well![92]

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[91] Bruce Condé, "Two Yemen Overprints Honor Valiant British Surgical Team For Services In Battle Area," *Linn's Weekly Stamp News*, April 19, 1965, 14.

[92] Yael Vered, *Hafikhah u-milḥamah be-Teman* (Tel Aviv: Am 'oved, 1967),135.



Fig. 4.11

The royalist memorial stamps for President Kennedy in 1965 were a direct appeal to the American people, during a pivotal congressional debate over renewing PL 480 wheat sales to Egypt.[93] Other stamps celebrated Saudi support for the Imam and Yemen by featuring pictures of al-Badr and King Faisal.[94] The "Jordan Relief Fund" stamps in 1967 honored Jordan's early support for the Imam and the Jordanian army's role in training for the use of heavy artillery, and were used to raise money for Jordanian and Palestinian refugees after the 1967 war.[95] Although Jordan recognized the YAR in 1965, withdrawing its support for al-Badr, these stamps seemed aimed at reconciliation. Even after the Egyptians withdrew, Condé continued issuing royalist stamps in an effort to garner world support for the royalist cause. A variety of twenty-five stamps were dedicated to the "Poison Gas Victims' Relief Fund," to support the victims of

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[93] Bruce Condé, "British Committee For Relief Of Yemeni Wounded Honored By Overprints On Three Air," *Linn's Weekly Stamp News*, March 21, 1966, 10.

[94] Bruce Condé, "Free Yemen's ICY Set Pays Tribute To Saudi Arabian Aid; First Of Haradh Rush Series," *Linn's Weekly Stamp News*, June 20, 1966, 32.

[95] Bruce Condé, "Yemen Issues First Jordan Relief Fund Semipostals In Low Denomination Overprints," *Linn's Weekly Stamp News*, December 18, 1967, 16.

Egyptian gas chemical warfare[96] in Yemen, a topic to be discussed in detail next chapter.



Fig. 4.12 Commemorative postage celebrating Mutawakkilite-Saudi alliance (September 16, 1965)

Nasser was not oblivious to the significance of al-Badr’s issuance of royalist stamps. In December 1964, the Mutawakkilite Kingdom of Yemen printed their last set of stamps with Saikali Press in Beirut, as the printing house was later pressured by Egypt into imposing a ban on the printing of stamps issued by the Imam.[97] Condé contacted the Harrison and Sons printing and postal company in London, commissioning them to print an order of Mutawakkilite aerograms. A significant delay in the London-based company, forced Condé to turn to the Dar al-Asfahani Press Company in Jeddah to fill a provisional order of 5,000 copies. Condé deemed the product “one of the world’s most attractive aerogrammes.” Dar al-Asfhani, the former stamp printers of the Saudi

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[96] Bruce Condé, "Final Roundup Nets Total Of 25 Varieties In Free Yemen's 'Poison Gas' Semipostal Set," *Linn's Weekly Stamp News*, January 8, 1968, 14.

[97] Bruce Condé, "'Phantom Philately' Sprouts In Free Yemen; Two Singles and Sheet Junked By Officials," *Linn's Weekly Stamp News*, December 28, 1964, 21. The stamps were previously shipped from Lebanon to the Saudi port of Jizan from where they were shipped to the royalist base of al-Qarah.

government, later assumed responsibility for printing most Mutawakkilite stamp orders.[98]

After Jordan recognized the YAR on January 22, 1965, Condé claimed to have been afraid of being arrested in Jordan because the Arab Postal Union issued warrant against him for printing Free Yemen stamps "offensive to President Gamal Abdel Nasser." Furthermore, all Arab states had been warned by Egypt not to carry mail affixed with "Free Yemen" stamps.[99] Understanding the importance, at least to Condé, of the royalist postal network, Prince Muhammad al-Hussein designated "a bomb-proof cavern, under an enormous boulder, which would be a tourist attraction in Yosemite National Park (it is perched on top of a sheer granite cliff)" as the Ministry of Communications office and Jawf General Post Office.[100]

Al-Badr commissioned "All-Yemen" stamps to be printed on November 8, 1964, as a prelude to the Yemen national congress in Sa'dah to give Yemenis the independence to choose their own government without Egyptian intervention.[101] Condé prepared royalist-republican "All-Yemen" stamps for the Haradh Conference on November 23, 1964 for the purpose of establishing a provisional government including representatives from both royalists and republicans.[102] The existence of these stamps underscored the Imam's intentions of reuniting the country through compromise, certainly a public relations victory by any measure.

[98] Bruce Condé, "Yemen Wartime Postal Stationery," *The Arab World Philatelist*, 1978, 22.

[99] Bruce Condé, "Odd Battle Of Stamp Orders Punctuates Conflict In Yemen, Philately Safe After Close Call," *Linn's Weekly Stamp News*, January 25, 1965, 22.

[100] Bruce Condé, "Odd Battle Of Stamp Orders Punctuates Conflict In Yemen, Philately Safe After Close Call," *Linn's Weekly Stamp News*, January 18, 1965, 16.

[101] Bruce Condé, "Yemeni Overprint 'Mariner', Two Fives Into One Ten To Supply Need Of Higher Value," *Linn's Weekly Stamp News*, June 21, 1965, 18.

[102] Bruce Condé, "Free Yemen's ICY Set Pays Tribute To Saudi Arabian Aid; First Of Haradh Rush Series," *Linn's Weekly Stamp News*, June 27, 1966, 26.

Al-Badr used stamps to memorialize fallen commanders and royalist of importance. The first memorial stamp was for Prince Ali al-Hussein, the first of the "Fighting Princes" to be killed in battle. Ali, who had previously met with UNYOM officials on royalist territory, was also known as the "Father of the Constitution" as he coordinated draft proposals of the Kingdom's constitution based on British and American principles that he studied at the American University of Beirut. The finished constitution was known as "National Charter of the Yemeni People" and was signed on December 25, 1964 in Imam's GHQ in Qarah. Ali was killed on June 15, 1964 near 'Uqlah under command of his uncle Prime Minister Hassan. Other memorial stamps included Qadi Ahmad as-Sayaghi, former Deputy Premier of the Yemen Kingdom, killed in Jawf in 1964, Sayed Mahammad Abu Munassir, deputy commander killed in Jawf, and Sheikh Ahmad al-Zayidi of the Jaham tribe of Sirwah. The term "martyr" was used rather than "war hero" as Yemeni religious authorities had declared jihad on Nasser in reaction to the killing of Muslim civilians.[103]

The postal routes themselves functioned clandestinely as a cover for arms and supplies shipments for northern royalist positions. Sharif Muhammad ibn Hussein, the nephew of the Emir of Ma'rib, acted as the local postmaster in his uncle's farmhouse. He sent royalist mail via the Sharif of Bayhan, located just south of the North Yemen border in the Federation of South Arabia. The Sharif of Bayhan was a staunch ally of al-Badr and provided transport of mail onwards to Aden. In addition to royalist post,

[103] Bruce Condé, "Memorial Stamp For Yemeni Prince, First Martyr Of Holy War Was Constitution's Father," *Linn's Weekly Stamp News*, March 7, 1966, 1. Prince Ali was particularly interested in parts of the American Bill of Rights and English Common Law, in addition to Article XI providing for the rights of the people's legislature to override the Imam's veto of law with a two-thirds vote. Prince Muhammad al-Hussein, Ali's brother, approved a version of the constitution in Jawf in April 1964.

the Bayhan territory was a source of munitions, essential supplies, and traveling mercenaries in aid of the Imam’s forces.[104]

These five and a half years witnessed the reconstruction of the Mutawakkilite Kingdom’s postal system from two or three tiny post offices in war torn Jawf and the Mashriq eastern provinces in November 1962 to sixty-five post offices and General Post Offices sites servicing 6,000-7,000 first-class inland letters daily and 25,000 pieces of outgoing overseas mail monthly. Condé claimed that royalist mail was sometimes faster than Saudi post because “our registry lists are always in correct geographical order.” Barring war-related delays, a letter could leave the Yemen border one day and arrive in London three days later via Jizan, Saudi Arabia.[105] Even years after the demise of the royalist opposition, Condé continued to appeal for historical recognition of the royalist stamps as official state-issued postage in the official philatelist postal registries.[106] The popularity of Mutawakkilite stamps continued to be a major topic of the Yemen Philatelic Society under the leadership of the group’s Canadian president Blair Stannard.[107] The real victory, however, was Condé’s ability to turn the Mutawakkilite stamps and postal system into Western propaganda to attract attention, sympathy, and support for the royalist cause. During a time of tribal tensions, Condé singlehandedly created a national institution that symbolically granted legitimacy to the royalist non-state actor.

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[104] Bruce Condé, "Free Yemen POD Carries On, Resumes Operations In West, North and East As Loyalists Repel Rebels In These Areas," *Linn's Weekly Stamp News*, April 1, 1963, 26.

[105] Bruce Condé, "The Matter of Yemen Postal Use Vs. The Stolow Criteria; Detailed Report From Abroad," *Linn's Weekly Stamp News*, June 17, 1968, 1.

[106] Linn’s Weekly Stamp News Archive. Bruce Conde letter to Charles W. Prichett (Linn’s Weekly), April 24, 1985.

[107] Blair Stannard, “Yemen: Booklet Panes,” *The Arab World Philatelist* 4 (1979), 35.

Chapter 5: The UN Yemen Observer Mission (UNYOM)

Imam al-Badr's "resurrection" in November 1962 inspired northern Yemeni tribes to contribute to a royalist offensive against Egyptian troops. Al-Badr's uncle, Prince Hassan, along with other members of the Hamid al-Din family led tribal militias in recapturing Ma'rib and Harib pushing the frontlines westwards towards Sana'a. The royalist military effort was supported by monetary aid and arms shipments over the Saudi border to the north. Both republican and royalist forces hunkered down in respective hilltop defensive positions from December 1962 through February 1963 during the rainy winter season. Even as Ralph Bunche, Undersecretary of the UN and US diplomat Ellsworth Bunker embarked on diplomatic missions to Cairo, Riyadh, and Sana'a, Nasser commissioned a total of 20,000 UAR troops to Yemen for the start of what became known as the "Ramadan Offensive". For the next year, the Egyptian army endeavored to regain control of roads leading north, east, and west of Sana'a and the major cities of Sa'dah and Ma'rib.

Ellsworth Bunker's agreements between Saudi Arabia and Egypt, and the subsequent fifteen-month UN Yemen Observer Mission (UNYOM), spoke to promoting an end to the internationalization of the Yemeni conflict. International diplomacy, however, appeared to have been disconnected from the reality of events on the ground both in stated goals and the implementation of UNYOM. UN Secretary-General U Thant was more concerned with the international implications of UN actions in Yemen than on the organization's ability to mediate regional hostilities.

Contemporary and historical accounts of the UN mission have described it as a failure from a diplomatic, political, and tactical perspective.[1] Other accounts have

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[1] These include: Dana Adams Schmidt, "The Civil War in Yemen," in *The International Regulation of Civil Wars,* ed. Evan Luard (London: Thames and Hudson, 1972) – Schmidt argues that the UN presence was actually detrimental as it gave Yemenis an excuse to avoid

minimized the importance of the mission in the overall narrative of the Yemeni civil war by relegating it to a few paragraphs or a footnote at most.[2] From July 1963 – September 1964, there was a notable increase in the size of the Egyptian military presence and Saudi military aid continued to arrive, albeit through more clandestine and varied geographical locations. The supply and hygiene of UN quarters were deemed dangerously inadequate contributing to the low morale of personnel. Many of the journalist accounts of the mission were skewed by the negative American and British opinions of the UN. Michael Crouch, the British Resident Adviser in Aden summed up the way his cohort felt about the UN mission in Yemen describing as "the mission from the UN anti-colonialist committee … sitting on the other side of the border making mischief."[3]

Recently available UN and Canadian archives challenge the perceived "failure" of UNYOM. The stated goal of the mission was to "observe" the withdrawals of Egypt and Saudi Arabia. Simply stated, at a certain point in the mission, there were no withdrawals to observe, a failure on the part of the two belligerent countries rather than the UN mission. The actual purpose of the mission was not to enforce an end to hostilities, but rather to maintain a symbolic presence in the region, the fruits of which would not become clear until the series of peace conferences following the mission's

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finding their own solution to the conflict, preferring instead to tell their people: "It is in the hands of the United Nations now" (145). Alan James, *Peacekeeping in International Politics* (London: MacMillan, 1990), 305. Edgar O'Ballance, *The War in Yemen* (Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Books, 1971).

[2] For example, see Ferris, Jesse, *Nasser's Gamble: How Intervention in Yemen cause the Six-Day War and the Decline of Egyptian Power* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2013).

[3] Bodleian Library Archive: Oxford University, Michael Crouch Papers, File 102, May 29, 1963.

It is somewhat ironic that several years later, the anti-British nationalist organizations in South Arabia, NLF and FLOSY, would refer to a subsequent UN mission as "UN Puppets of British imperialism" (Julian Paget, *Last Post: Aden 1963-1967* (London: Faber and Faber, 1969), 190).

termination. Furthermore, UNYOM was the beginning of a new era of UN missions during the 1960s and 1970s that were hampered by diplomatic and financial obstacles. In structuring UNYOM, Thant endeavored to create a mission that was both uncontroversial and low-cost, a clear departure from previous UN operations of lavish expenditure. Reports and complaints about inadequate supplies and low morale were more a protest against Thant's attempts to redefine the place of peacekeeping in the UN rather than an objective testament to reality on the ground. UNYOM was in fact a valiant effort to maintain a benign and limited international presence in the midst of an intractable internationalized conflict, thereby confining the global repercussions of the civil war and laying the foundations for subsequent efforts at reconciliation.

The Emergence of Regionalism and a Financing Crisis in the UN

When Swedish UN Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld died in a plane crash on September 18, 1961, he marked the end to a "heyday era of a freewheeling secretary-general" and an aggressive UN peacekeeping policy.[4] From 1946, Hammarskjöld and his Norwegian predecessor Trygve Lie had exercised an agenda dominated by the US and Western Europe and the priorities of the emerging Cold War global conflict. The UN peacekeeping agenda was dominated by a collection of mid-level countries including Canada, Sweden, and Denmark in what Canadian Secretary of State Howard Charles Green termed the "Scandi-Canadian axis in the UN". Lester Pearson, who served as Canadian Prime Minister during the Yemen civil war, is known by historians as the "Father of Peacekeeping" and the public face of Canadian international

[4] Bernard J. Firestone, *The United Nations under U Thant, 1961-1971* (Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 2001), 32.

diplomacy. His championing of peacekeeping encouraged the Canadian contingent of pilots to join the UN mission in Yemen.[5]

By the end of 1960, however, following a period of rapid post-colonial independence in Africa, non-Western countries came to constitute the large majority of the General Assembly. This new Asian-African regional bloc called for a decentralization of the UN leadership and a shift in focus from the East-West conflict to the regional economic development of the Southern Hemisphere.[6] Brian Urquhart, a former Undersecretary of the UN, explained that the emergence of the third world in the UN transferred discussion and significance from the Security Council to the General Assembly, a situation with which neither the West nor the USSR was comfortable.[7]

This regional movement gained a voice in 1955 at the Asia-African Conference held in Bandung, Indonesia, bringing together twenty-nine regional states to formulate joint principles of economic development and international relations. The Non-Aligned Movement, the group's official title, met in Belgrade in September 1961, in the First Conference of Non-Aligned Heads of State to formalize their commitment to avoiding military agreements with the superpowers while supporting national independence movements. Nasser was an integral part of the Movement's leadership and would later

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[5] Ann G. Livingstone, "Canada's policy and attitudes towards United Nations Peacekeeping, 1956-1964", PhD diss., Keele University, 1995. Livingstone argues that Canada's "middlepowermanship" gave the country significance in a foreign policy dominated by the great powers. Canadians saw themselves as a "fire-brigade" for international crisis.

Pearson was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1957 for his work on resolving the Suez Crisis and envisioning the UN peacekeeping force in Sinai.

[6] C. V. Narasimhan, *Regionalism in the United Nations* (New York: Asia Publishing House, 1977), 43.

[7] Brian Urquhart, *A Life in Peace and War* (New York: Harper and Row, 1987), 171.

use this context to justify support for Egyptian intervention in Yemen.[8] In June 1964, the "Group of 77" added to these initial non-aligned nations in forming the largest intergovernmental organization of developing countries in the UN, under the pretext of promoting their collective economic interests.[9] The regional politicization of UN power dynamics during UNYOM's mandate had a profound effect on the limited diplomatic latitude offered to planners of the mission and observers on the ground.

In the search for a new secretary-general following Hammarskjöld's death, the impetus was to choose a candidate from the Afro-Asian bloc of nations. U Thant, ambassador to the UN from Burma, perceived as a third world country not involved "in a festering conflict that could alienate any of the great powers," was appointed for the position and served his first term until April 1963.[10] Thant was sensitive to Soviet charges levied against Hammarskjöld's western subjectivity and sought to develop a persona of "neutrality" and "impartiality". This philosophy did have its limits, particularly in relation to what Thant perceived as the "historic injustices perpetrated against third world nations."[11] During his tenure as secretary-general, he would oversee the transition of the UN from an East-West Cold War arena, to an institution forced to grapple with the priorities and concerns of the third world. The mission to Yemen and

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[8] The principles of the Non-Aligned Movement were agreed upon during a preliminary conference in Cairo in April 1961. The YAR would later become a member of the Movement as well.

[9] The first ministerial meeting of this group of 77 countries occurred in October 1967 in Algeria. To date, there are 133 members in the "Group of 77", making it one of the most powerful and influential groups in the UN.

[10] Firestone, *The United Nations under U Thant*, xvii. April 1963, was to have been the end of Hammarskjöld's term.

[11] Firestone, *The United Nations under U Thant,* xx. Firestone explains that Thant envisioned the coming decades to be dominated by the North-South conflict of developed-undeveloped nations, rather than the East-West Cold War conflict of the previous decade. The General Assembly, dominated by countries of the third world, would serve as the "prime arena" for these future conflicts.

the UN stance towards the conflict were greatly influenced by Thant's preferences for the developing countries of the UAR and YAR, his desire to appease the Soviet foreign office, and perhaps an effort to secure support for a second term as secretary-general after April 1963.

In the midst of this geographic transition in the UN, a crisis broke out in newly-independent Congo drawing the intervention of a UN peacekeeping mission, known as the UN Operation in the Congo (ONUC), which would eventually amount to 20,000 troops over a period from July 1960 to June 1964. UN forces racked up exorbitant bills and suffered many casualties, including Hammarskjöld himself whose plane crashed on the way to a ceasefire conference. The chaos of the emerging civil war in Congo embroiled ONUC in a complex domestic conflict that went beyond normal peacekeeping duties. ONUC was forced to take sides in a country divided into four rival camps and was accused of having facilitated the overthrow of Congolese Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba.[12]

ONUC's mandate was established nearly four years after the beginning of the UN Emergency Force (UNEF), a peacekeeping mission stationed along the Armistice Demarcation Lines in Sinai between Israel and Egypt. The financing of these two operations and of peacekeeping missions in general was a contested issue in the UN, with four distinct opinions disagreeing over the responsibility for financing UN peacekeeping. Soviet Union Deputy Foreign Minister Kuznetsov argued that the aggressor nations should be responsible to maintain their own international peacekeepers. Representatives from Latin America argued that the permanent members of the Security Council should fund the missions because "they have a

[12] *The Blue Helmets: A Review of United Nations Peacekeeping* (New York: United Nations Department of Public Information, 1996), 175.

primary obligation for the maintenance of peace and security under the charter." Latin American and Asian delegates also offered the opinion that either wealthy nations or the countries with the greatest economic interests in the region should pay the bills. The Canadian delegates, one of the largest contributors of peacekeeping forces, advocated a "compulsory payment principle", as they envisioned peace and security as a collective responsibility borne equally by all UN members.[13] Lacking consensus on the responsibility for financing the missions, Hammarskjöld established separate budgets for each mission to be funded by voluntary contributions from all UN members.

1963, the year UNYOM was approved by the Security Council, was the most expensive year for UN peacekeeping costs with the continued administration of UNEF, ONUC, and the annual peacekeeping budget exceeding $195 million, an amount ten times larger than the UN's first annual budget in 1946. This contributed to the overall UN financial shortfall of $110 million in 1963.[14] Members of these two missions would later be sent to Yemen to fill administrative roles in UNYOM, bringing along with them their grudges and political tensions from Congo and Sinai. The deficits incurred as a consequence of financing ONEF and ONUC placed further pressure on U Thant to run the mission to Yemen frugally and to secure funds from the aggressor nations themselves, rather than from UN resources. To make matters worse, the Soviet

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[13] Peter Bishop, "Canada's Policy on the Financing of U.N. Peace-Keeping Operations," *International Journal* 20 (1965): 463-483.

[14] Michael K. Carroll, *Pearson's Peacekeepers: Canada and the United Nations Emergency Forces, 1956-67* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2009).

Union and France refused to pay their share of assessments for UNEF and ONUC deepening the financial crisis of UN peacekeeping missions.[15]

Ralph Bunche compared the crisis in Yemen to Congo and stressed patience in bringing about results.[16] He would later term this approach as "tin cup" peacekeeping, a sure recipe for futility, as demonstrated by the UN mission to Yemen.[17] Beyond the financial constraints imposed on the proposed UN mission to Yemen, U Thant had "to ensure that each new mission was sufficiently uncontroversial that no state would use its existence to justify further attacks on the UN."[18]

A Rough Beginning

Conscious of the need to both keep costs down and propose an uncontroversial mission to Yemen, U Thant sent Swedish Lieutenant-General Carl von Horn, then serving as the Chief of Staff of the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO), to Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Yemen to ascertain the potential needs of a group of UN observers. Von Horn, described as "prestigious but stormy," was to join UNYOM after having served in Congo for six months in 1960 and almost two years in Jerusalem.[19] Following a long illustrious UN career highlighted by comfortable office positions, the more rustic field mission to Yemen was seen by von Horn as a personal

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[15] Karl Th. Birgisson, "United Nations Yemen Observation Mission," in *The Evolution of UN Peacekeeping: Case Studies and Comparative Analysis*, ed. William J. Durch (New York: Henry L. Stimson Center, 1993), 211.

[16] TNA, FO 371/16831/BM 1071/9, March 7, 1963.

[17] Firestone, *The United Nations under U Thant*, 31.

[18] Peter Jones, "UNYOM: The Forgotten Mission," *Canadian Defence Review Quarterly* 22 (1992), 18-22.

[19] "The Mess in Yemen," *Time Magazine*, vol. 82, issue 11, p. 41, September 13, 1963. Von Horn remarried in 1964 to Elisabeth Liljenroth, a Swedish movie actress thirty years his junior, perhaps the reason why he needed to leave UNYOM early and take personal leave in July 1963.

offense bestowed upon him by U Thant.[20] In 1962, von Horn's wife Scarlett died in Hadassah Hospital in Jerusalem, leaving von Horn alone with their fourteen year old son Johan. His personal tragedy was confounded by his disdain for U Thant and the new African states that had recently joined the UN. Upon arriving in New York to accept his Yemen assignment, von Horn noted: "The old ambience was gone. The new states were reveling in the politically inspired largesse of the great powers, and had discovered how well it paid to shout and snarl and be abusive." In condescendingly terms, he described members of the non-aligned nations as "enjoying influence without responsibility…using their inflated importance to band together to become a pressure group." Von Horn felt that the Americans and Russians must have regretted allowing their rivalry to open the door to these countries, as he believed they were a "great embarrassment to themselves in the United Nations where the balance of power had been seriously upset…contributing to the organization's eventual decline."[21] Von Horn had great respect, admiration, and friendship with former Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld, feelings that he did not share with U Thant, a matter that would impact von Horn's stance towards UNYOM. He would later accuse Thant of seeming "almost entirely preoccupied with the political implications of virtually every step which peacekeepers took in the field."[22]

Thant had originally conceived the mission in terms of "not more than 50 observers, with suitable transportation, aerial and ground, for patrol purposes."[23] In May 1963,

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[20] Schmidt, *Yemen The Unknown War*, 196. Practically the only creature comforts of prestige offered to von Horn were Imam Ahmad's old white horse and Daimler.

[21] Von Horn, Carl, *Soldiering for Peace* (New York: David McKay Company, 1966), 307.

[22] Jones, "UNYOM: The Forgotten Mission."

[23] UN Archives, S-5794, Report by the Secretary-General to the Security Council on the functioning of UNYOM, July 2, 1964. Given the fact that Thant presented this speech to the

von Horn returned from a trip to Yemen with his report asking for 200 personnel, a $1 million budget, and four months in which to oversee the agreement.[24] This divergence in opinion on the size of the UN mission marked the beginning of a stormy relationship between von Horn and Thant that would end in von Horn's premature resignation in August 1963. The Soviet Union insisted that a UN mission should not be sent to Yemen without explicit approval from the Security Council, setting the timetable for the mission even further behind schedule.[25] As if to reiterate his disdain for Thant, before the official start of the mission, von Horn had already submitted a request for two week personal leave in July 1963.[26]

On June 11, 1963, the UN Security Council issued Resolution 179, calling for the formation of UNYOM with the limited function of observing the disengagement and reporting back to the UN Security Council via the Secretary General:

> The Security Council requests the Secretary-General to establish the observation operation as defined by him; urges the parties concerned to observe fully the terms of disengagement set out…and to refrain from any action which would increase tension in the area.

Saudi Arabia and Egypt agreed to split the cost of the initial two months of the observer mission, an effort that would eventually cost a total of $1.8 million.[27] The YAR refused to contribute to the mission, claiming that they were the "injured party."[28]

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entire Security Council, there is little doubt that he was trying to sell the UN mission to the Soviet Union and to a general philosophy of cheaper peacekeeping.

[24]http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/past/unyombackgr.html

[25] Ellsworth Bunker would later blame the UNYOM delays in losing his diplomatic momentum in the interim between his report to the UN on April 12, 1963, and the beginning of the mission in the end of June. Howard B. Schaffer, *Ellsworth Bunker: Global Troubleshooter, Vietnam Warhawk* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 126.

[26] UN Archives, S-0656-0002, Folder 2, June 15, 1963, von Horne to Bunche.

[27] http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/past/unyomfacts.html

[28] TNA, FO 371/168833/BM 1071/42, May 21, 1963.

The initial outlay amounted to a $200,000 contribution by each country for a two month observer mission.[29] A speech by Saudi Ambassador Rashad Pharaon, explained Saudi Arabia's willingness to support the UN mission to Yemen:

> "The United Nations has justified its existence and shown the value of its work on various occasions of international conflict recently in Yemen. The conflict in Yemen is one between brothers, and it should be settled, as Saudi Arabia has suggested from the outset, in accordance with the aspirations and desires of the Yemeni people, for my country is convinced that *ultimately it is they who will decide their own future*. In view of the traditional friendly relations and spiritual ties between the Yemeni and Saudi Arabian peoples, my Government, which has sincerely collaborated with the United Nations, is prepared to give its honest and loyal support to any effort designed to produce a peaceful, just and equitable solution to this problem. We are sure that the efforts made by the Secretary General of the United Nations will help to put an end to this conflict and to similar conflicts which might threaten peace in different parts of the world."[30]

Under the terms of the agreement, the Saudis would cease aid to the royalists and the Egyptians would begin a withdrawal of its forces from Yemen. A twenty kilometer demilitarized zone would be established on either side of the YAR border with Saudi Arabia, within which UN observers would be stationed to ensure the implementation of the Bunker agreement. Another group of UN observers would keep track of the Egyptian military withdrawal from the airfield in Sana'a and the port in Hodeidah. The purpose of the mission was to "check and certify on the observance by the two parties of the terms of the disengagement agreement (S/5298)". In as such, the mission had no official peacekeeping role.

At maximum strength the mission had 189 military personnel, including 25 military observers, 114 military officers, 50 members of the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF);

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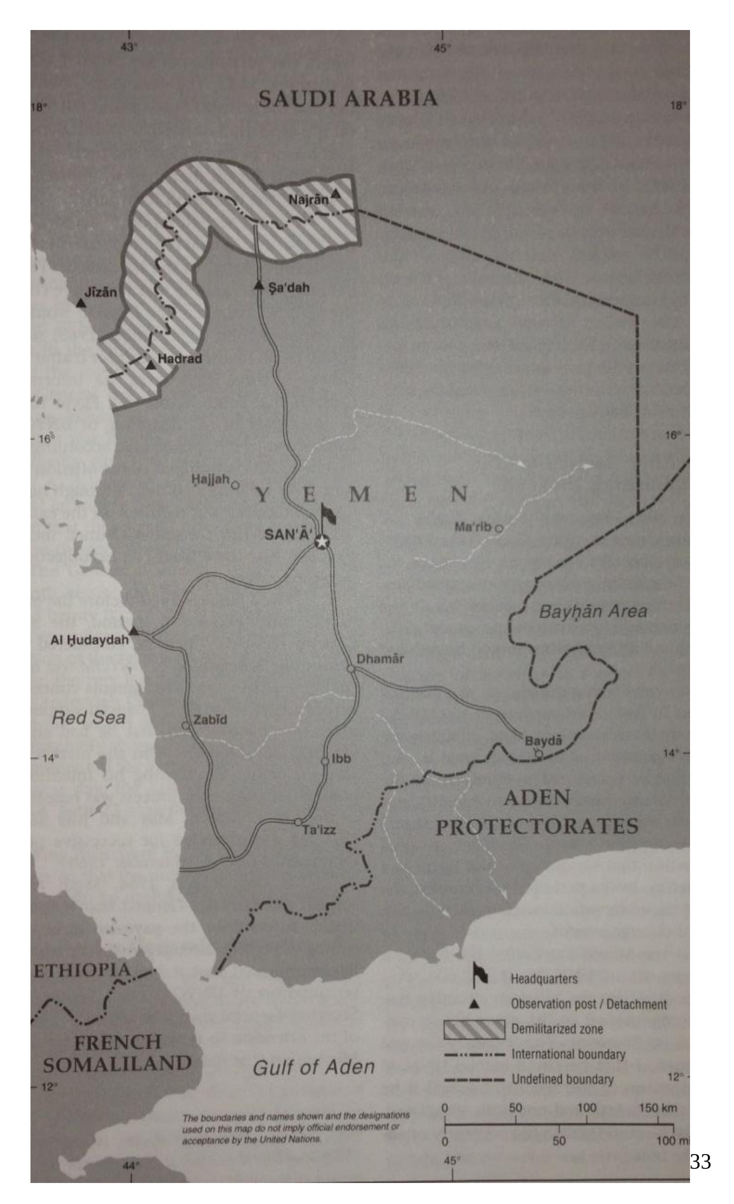
[29] The Soviet Union pressured the Security Council to accept only renewable two month terms for the observer mission, contingent upon available financial resources for its continuation.

[30] United Nations General Assembly, 18th session, 1,235th plenary meeting, October 9, 1963.

supported by international and local civilian staff. The majority of the staff was from Canada and Yugoslavia, but others hailed from Australia, Denmark, Ghana, India, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Pakistan, and Sweden. The troops were placed in Jizan and Najran, Saudi Arabia and Sa'dah, Yemen. The air unit consisted of 50 RCAF officers and pilots employing Caribou and Otter aircraft based out of Sana'a, Jizan, and Najran.[31] It was presumed that royalist arms arrived in Yemen by sea via the Red Sea shores of Jizan and by land through Najran.[32]

[31] Library and Archives Canada. RG 24 – Volume 21494. September 4, 1963. The mission consisted of a reconnaissance unit of 114 Yugoslav officers who had been serving as part of UNEF.

[32] Umback, Ian, "134 ATU in Yemen," http://www.115atu.ca/yem.htm.



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Fig. 5.1 UNYOM demilitarized zone on Saudi-YAR border.

The Canadian Cabinet agreed to contribute to the mission on June 13, 1963. The Canadians provided 23 RCAF fliers and 2 Caribou aircraft based out of El Arish, Sinai.[34] Paul Martin the Canadian Secretary of State for External Affairs stated during the parliamentary approval of the UN observer mission:

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[33] UN Archives, S-0656-0003, UNYOM DMZ map.

[34] Library and Archives Canada. RG 24 – Volume 21494. June 12, 1964. The Canadian aircraft and personnel had been part of UNEF originally created to maintain the demilitarization of the Sinai Peninsula and uphold the agreed upon armistice lines after the 1956 War.

> “It is hoped that this will bring about the termination of a situation in that country which has become increasingly acute since the establishment of the present republican government in September of last year, and will help to avoid the danger of the internal conflict in that country developing into more widespread hostilities throughout the area.”[35]

Thomas Clement Douglas, a Canadian Member of Parliament from British Columbia added:

> “I wish to congratulate the government on having accepted this responsibility, and to say that…we shall always give out support to any contribution which Canada may make through serving under the United Nations for the maintenance of peace throughout the world and supplying part of a world peace force.”[36]

From the perspective of Martin, Douglas, and much of the rest of Canadian Parliament in June 1963, it seemed that UNYOM had the potential to bring “world peace” or at the very least to contain a local conflict. While it might be tempting to dismiss the perceived potential benefit of the UNYOM as another case of misplaced Canadian optimism during the 1960s, there was in fact a shared hope among the UN and the US that the Saudis and the Egyptians would be willing to adhere to the tenets of the April 1963 Bunker agreements. The war was proving to be a constant drain on the Egyptian economy and political apparatus and the Saudis were in the midst of a transfer of power between Saud and Faisal. Canadian optimism, however, quickly dissipated before the observer mission even began.

As if in a prophetic omen of things to come, during an overflight of Yemen on June 19, 1963, in preparation for the start of the Yemen mission, von Horn’s aircraft sustained damage from an unspecified source of ground fire en route from Sa’dah to Sana’a. The immediate reaction expressed alarm over the substantial risk of using

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[35] Canada House of Commons Debates – Volume II, 1963.

[36] Canada House of Commons Debates – Volume II, 1963.

low-flying single-engine aircraft, vulnerable to ground fire from sporadic hostilities.[37] Von Horn sent Thant a vitriolic letter describing the incident, blaming Thant for the lack of air support. Furthermore, von Horn argued, others should have been doing the reconnaissance rather than him as the task was beneath his dignity.[38]

In the aftermath of this incident, Canadian and UN official suggested that reconnaissance flights remain above a certain altitude in order to stay clear of any ground fire from belligerents on the ground. While the safety and wellbeing of peacekeeping forces was of utmost concern, there was a perception that the absence of low-flying observation would seriously detract from the overall efficacy of the aerial observation mission. Those advocating a riskier, yet more effective flight regulations, purportedly believed that royalists and republican forces alike would immediately recognize the UN peacekeeping planes and respectfully redirect their fire. Skeptics and opinions on either side of this argument continued to make their cases on issues of aviation and ground reconnaissance throughout the interim of the mission.

The debate over the relative safety of UN peacekeeping pilots was not, however, limited to their flight altitude. Following the incident with von Horn's aircraft, U Thant requested that for the safety of pilots involved no UNYOM missions should operate in areas other than those openly observing a ceasefire.[39] Prior to the start of the mission, there was no actual ceasefire between the royalists, republicans and Egyptians. The only "ceasefire" zone was the demilitarized border area between the YAR and Saudi Arabia. The limitation of observation to this area served to further distance UNYOM from actual events in Yemen.

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[37] Library and Archives Canada. RG 25 – Volume 6144. June 19, 1963.

[38] UN Archives, S-0656-0002, Folder 5, June 17, 1963, von Horn to U Thant.

[39] Library and Archives Canada. RG 25 – Volume 21592. June 19, 1963.

Following U Thant's amended guidelines for peacekeeping pilots Canadian officials began to recognize the futility of this ill-defined mission. It was becoming apparent that the "aim of the operation is to provide a face-saving cover for this Saudi-UAR disengagement which would prevent a direct confrontation from possibly engulfing the whole Middle East in war". UNYOM was not intended to bring a stop to hostilities between Republican and Royalist forces, but was rather a context within which the Egyptians and Saudis could respectfully disengage without conceding defeat.[40]

Within days of first arriving at the UN Headquarters in Sana'a, there were already grievances from the personnel. Canadians complained of a lack of provisions and believed that the water had been poisoned by Yemenis who threw their dead bodies into wells being utilized by UN officials. Multiple reports were sent to UN headquarters for an immediate airlift of drinking water. Brian Pridham, an official from the Arabian Department of the British Foreign Office, expressed a great deal of skepticism towards these tales of water issues: "The story about the water, as well as the water itself, takes some swallowing. The lowest plain around Sana'a is renowned for its wells, and even if the Yemeni had been so un-Arab as to pollute their own water, it would have been far simpler to tap any local mountain spring than to fly water in."[41]

On July 2, a briefing was received from Sana'a, complaining about the inability to boil water at a high enough temperature in high elevation to purify water of high bacteria content.[42] While in reality drinking this partially boiled water would likely not

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[40] Library and Archives Canada. RG 25 – Volume 6144. June 21, 1963.

[41] TNA, C.T. Crowe, FO 371/16885/ BM 1071/98, August 7, 1963.

[42] Library and Archives Canada. RG 25 – Volume 6144. July 2, 1963. During the 1960s, it was assumed that one had to boil water for a longer period of time in higher elevations in order to rid the water of harmful bacteria. More recent studies indicate that almost all of the harmful bacteria would have already been killed off at temperatures lower than that of the boiling point, even at high elevations.

have harmed the personnel, the fact that this briefing was one of the first major issues from the peacekeeping mission in Yemen is indicative of more serious problems in preparing for conditions in Yemen. It was as if troops arrived from their previous UN posts in Congo and Sinai only to discover, much to their surprise, that Sana'a was set atop a mountain rather than a plateau.[43] The purity of water in Sana'a was representative of the greater difficulty of transitioning UN personnel to the shoestring mission in Yemen, a new model being advocated by U Thant.

The Mission Continues to Unravel

On August 20, 1963, General von Horn submitted his urgent resignation, effective officially on August 31, in protest of the unsatisfactory administrative arrangements for UNYOM. He remarked in his letter of resignation: "When my duty-bound representations so often are boomeranged as "unwarranted remarks" I feel [sic] having lost your confidence and therefore I have no other choice but to herewith tender my resignation."[44]

Von Horn highlighted several specific areas where he thought the mission was particularly problematic. The purported goal of UN operations was to observe the withdrawal of Saudi Arabia and Egypt, a task the current mission was not capable of completing. Based on the mission's reconnaissance, the Saudis were no longer aiding the Imam's forces across the Yemen-Saudi border, although this did not preclude tribal groups from conducting their own trade. In a meeting with UK Ambassador Colin Crowe, acting Saudi Deputy Foreign Minister Mas'ud explained "that Saudis have ceased all aid through official channels, but cannot account for illicit arms trade". In

[43] Holden explains that many Americans and Europeans mistakenly assumed that Yemen was a flat desert like the rest of Arabia and were dismayed to find rugged mountains (David Holden, *Farewell to Arabia* (New York: Walker and Company, 1966), 101-102).

[44] UN Archives, S-0656-0003, Folder 2, August 21, 1963, von Horn to U Thant.

addition Mas'ud reiterated that Jizan and Najran have functioned for centuries as a market for the local Yemeni economy and as such attract significant movement of non-military goods. This created further difficulties for the UN as there was a need to distinguish between contraband and legal trade.[45]

Additional impediments along the Saudi-Yemeni border further limited the mission's ability to observe, as aerial and ground reconnaissance could only be carried out during daylight hours for logistical reasons. Given the intense heat during the majority of the year in Yemen, however, much of the travel was conducted at night when there would be no UN observers on site. Although UN peacekeepers solved this issue by maintaining a fixed observer position alongside a main road for 40 hour shifts at a time, von Horn did not deem this sustainable for a successful mission. For example, a UN ground patrol observed eleven camels and sixteen donkeys loaded with sacks and wooden boxes passing through the Saudi Arabian border town of Nahuga. When asked, the leader of the convoy explained that all he was carrying was food. Believing him, the observers let him through without having him checked or questioned further.[46]

Von Horn complained that he could not verify Nasser's claim to have withdrawn 8,300 troops through independent observation. UNYOM personnel did not have access to Egyptian troop transport facilities in Hodeidah or the Egyptian garrisons in Sana'a. He believed that the apparent movement of Egyptian soldiers was merely a rotation of troops rather than an effectual withdrawal. In essence, from von Horn's perspective,

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[45] UN Archives, S-0656-0003, Folder 1, September 3, 1963, Rikhye to Bunche. Mas'ud further elucidated on Saudi thinking: "Yemenis have classical pattern of civil war, revolt, counter-revolt." Saudis have "no special love for Imam nor for republicans", and only want to have Yemenis left to find their own solution."

[46] UN Archives, S-0656-0003, Folder 4, September 19, 1963, UNYOM commander to Secretary General.

Nasser was making a mockery of the mission and his agreed withdrawal. As if to add salt to the wound, Nasser continued unrestrained aerial bombardment and continuous encroachment on the “demilitarized zone”.[47] According to the eyewitness account of American civilian working for Yemen Aid Team in July 1963, at least 600-700 Egyptian troops were seen disembarking in Hodeidah. Yugoslav Deputy Commander General Branko Pavlovic added: "I wish to point out that while UAR authorities are reluctant to give us departing troop information, they resent any inquiries regarding incoming forces." Despite the fact that UNYOM observers were required to oversee Egyptian troop withdrawals, UAR officials had asked UN observers to leave the premises during troop movements on numerous occasions. Not surprisingly, during these instances, reports confirmed the arrival of additional Egyptian soldiers to replace those who had been sent home as part of the usual troop rotation.[48]

The second major concern noted by von Horn was the difficulty of securing financial support for the mission. In agreeing to fund the UN Mission, the Saudis provided money while the UAR promised only the equivalent value in logistical support. Von Horn refused on numerous occasions to use UAR transports or facilities as it would have compromised the objectivity of the mission.[49] This difficulty in maintaining a neutral and uninvolved position is best highlighted by the following two incidents. On July 23, 1963, reports were sent to UN headquarters that UAR aircraft were following UNYOM Caribou aircraft during flights from Sana’a to Sa’dah. Although the UAR may have been weighing the short term risks of possible ground attack against UN aircraft, it was widely believed that the long-term impact of close

[47] Library and Archives Canada, RG 24 – Volume 21494, August 26, 1963.

[48] UN Archives, S-0656-0002, Folder 2, July 12, 1963, Pavlovic to Rolz-Bennett.

[49] Library and Archives Canada. RG 24 – Volume 21494. August 26, 1963..

association with one of the two belligerent parties would be detrimental to the mission's neutrality. In a second incident in July 1963, UN aircraft were seen bringing wounded Egyptian soldiers to Sana'a for treatment. If done extensively, this would call UN neutrality into question as well, as they would have been seen as active participants in Egyptian military operations. Canadian Secretary of State Paul Joseph James Martin released a directive indicating that the transport of non-UN personnel should be limited to situations where lives are in danger and no other aircraft is in the region. Any extensive airlift of Egyptian or Saudi troops on UN aircraft would not only cast doubts as to the neutrality of the mission, but might actually put UN personnel in danger. Either side might otherwise consider UN aircraft as troop transports for one of the belligerent parties.[50]

Interaction with UAR troops was difficult to avoid given the nature of the Egyptian contribution to the UN mission. While Saudi Arabia pledged $200,000 in cash, Nasser promised only to provide logistical assistance equivalent to $200,000.[51] As a result, UN aircraft was competing with the UAR for airspace, particularly around Sana'a where the old airport had no control tower and only a single runway that was in essence a 14,000 foot-long gravel surface.[52] These circumstances were a deliberate attempt by the Egyptian air force to use UN observers as a cover for bombing raids over royalist territory in Yemen and Saudi Arabia. Close encounters with UAR aircraft were additionally a consequence of the language barrier between the Canadian pilots and the Egyptian control-tower who spoke no English. The Egyptian air force was, however,

[50] Library and Archives Canada, RG 24 – Volume 21494, July 23, 1963.

[51] UN Archives, S-5325, "Report of the Secretary-General on the latest developments on the proposal to send a UN observation mission to Yemen", June 7, 1963.

[52] George E. Mayer, "134 ATU (Air Transport Unit), Sana'a Yemen 1962-3, June 24, 2013. Mayer claims that "dodging the Russian made Yak fighters flown by Egyptian pilots was almost suicidal."

able to communicate the need for priority access to the airfield, barring UN aircraft from the field during Egyptian maneuvers.[53]

In November 1963, Saudi Prince Muhammad ibn Nayef and corporal Saher ben Abd al Amer reported seeing two aircraft passing over the Jizan checkpoint before hearing explosions in al-Kuba, a Saudi border town. The attack occurred on Thursday November 21, a traditional regional market day during which 4,000 people gathered on the banks of the local wadi. When two airplanes approached from the west, people ran for cover. After the planes circled once, they left towards the north, clearly displaying their white color and UN emblem. When two more planes approached from the southeast 10 minutes later, the locals did not run, assuming that these were UN aircraft as well, and then the bombing began. The main targets were five trucks parked in the middle of the market. The attack lasted thirty-five minutes that included bombs and gun fire. Among the dead were children, women, and men from Saudi Arabia and Yemen. UN Sargent Paulsen recounted having visited al-Kuba numerous times and not seeing any suspicious Saudi military activity.[54]

A third element to von Horn's grievances was on a more personal level. Von Horn's requests for airlift of material from Rafah were rejected because of expense. Much to his ire, material would be sent via sea. Von Horn perceived this rejection as a personal affront by Indian General Indar Jit Rikhye, who had been serving as military advisor to U Thant. General Rikhye also rejected Von Horn's request for extra leave for his personnel as compensation for the difficulty of operating in Yemen. This was part of a larger debate that included the level of personnel salaries, sufficient supply, and

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[53] Fred Gaffen, *In the Eye of the Storm: A History of Canadian Peacekeeping* (Toronto: Deneau & Wayne Publishers, 1987), 80.

[54] UN Archives, S-0656-0003, Folder 7, November 21, 1963, Sargent Paulson testimonial. He claimed that the only purpose of this UAR attack on Saudi territory was "terror".

hygienic accommodations which von Horn and other deemed insufficient.[55] Sargent McLellan, a member of the UNYOM personnel, sent a formal request to UN headquarters taking up the same issue of compensation, requesting increase in salary given the risk entailed in the UN mission in Yemen. McLellan insisted that he was not being greedy in asking for more money, he was only advocating for fairness.[56]

Yugoslav Deputy Commander General Branko Pavlovic took over from von Horn as interim commander of the UNYOM. He had previously served in this capacity during von Horn's two week absence in July. Pavlovic faced additional difficulties, however, because of linguistic barriers (he spoke little English) and was replaced by Indian Lieutenant General P.S. Gyani before the end of the September 1963.[57]

During this leadership transition in November 1964, Yugoslavia announced the withdrawal of its ground forces from Yemen, following the end of the four month original proposal made by U Thant. Without a presence on the ground, the entire observation mission became reliant on aerial reconnaissance. Furthermore, the declining effectiveness of the four single engine Otters in the hot and mountainous Yemeni climate forced the RCAF to rely on the larger Caribous, which fly at a higher

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[55] Library and Archives Canada. RG 24 – Volume 21494. August 26, 1963.

There were rumors that U Thant was purposely ignoring von Horn's reports entirely (Edward Weintal and Charles Cartlet, *Facing the Brink: An intimate study of crisis diplomacy* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1967), 51).

[56] UN Archives, S-0656-0001, Folder 2, January 1964, McLellan to UN, was written as a formal letter on behalf of himself and other members of his cohort.

[57] Pavlovic would later serve as the UN Chief of Staff for the mission. While serving as the Commander and Chief of Staff of the mission, Saudis were often suspicious of Pavlovic and of the Yugoslav contingency of the mission, and were hesitant to work with them. From 1919 through 1980, Yugoslavia was led by the communist leader Tito. Although the Yugoslav presence was less than desirable for the Saudis it prevented Nasser from accusing UN mission of partiality.

altitude, providing even less “observation”, although at a safer distance and with greater reliability in the Arabian climate. [58]


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Fig. 5.2 UN Otters parked in the Jizan airfield.

In an attempt to find a solution to the absence of a Yugoslavian military presence, Gyani planned for Saudi military representatives to be stationed at checkpoints along with UN observers. Saudi patrols were not, however, to accompany UN observers into Yemen territory. The Saudi soldiers were responsible for checking the contents of the convoy with "a thorough scrutiny" while the patrol commander merely observed and made notes for his report. UN observers could only ask Saudis to stop vehicles and requisition contraband or ammunition, but were instructed not to inspect convoys themselves and certainly not without Saudi officials present. The observers handwritten reports, covered in a layer of sand even while stored in their archival folders, detailed the movement of troops in the demilitarized zone, convoys between Saudi Arabia and

[58] Library and Archives Canada, RG 24, Volume 21494, November 12, 1963

[59] http://www.115atu.ca/yem.htm. George Mayer’s photo collection. The red markings are of the RCAF.

Yemen, air activity, hostile military activity, personnel and equipment redeployment, and any indication of UAR withdrawal.[60]

After intense insistence by U Thant, the Canadians agreed to continue supplying members of the RCAF for a primarily aerial observer mission. Pier P. Spinelli, the acting Undersecretary and Director of the European Office of the UN, was brought on to serve as the civilian Special Representative to the Secretary General and Head of the Mission in Yemen. Although no effectual Egyptian withdrawal was noted, it seemed that the very presence of the UN in Yemen, even in a limited capacity, was a deterrent to full-scale UAR assaults on the royalists or on Saudi Arabian territory. With this in mind, Thant managed to secure five additional two month renewals, carrying the mission until September 4, 1964. According to Thant's reports to the Security Council in 1964, while fighting continued in Yemen, air attacks on Saudi border villages had subsided, with few exceptions.[61]

Although direct confrontation between Saudi Arabia and Egypt may have subsided, munitions transports across the border were growing more brazen. Heavy transports were seen traveling through the Saudi border towns of al-Jara'a and al-Kuba, but vehicles were not checked by observers, "owing to the hostile attitude shown by the drivers and vehicle guards." The trucks were, however, observed to be carrying "war materials and soldiers."[62] The town of Jizan, as well, was being used as a transport

[60] UN Archives, S-0657-007, Folder 1, November 1, 1963, Colonel Branko Pavlovic, Chief of Staff UNYOM, "UNYOM Operations Instructions."

[61] UN Archives, S-0656-0003, Folder 7, January 2, 1964, U Thant to Security Council.

[62] UN Archives, S-0656-0003, Folder 10, August 27, 1964, Sabharawal to Spinelli and Bunche. The Governor of Jizan submitted an official complaint, claiming that UAR planes were returning to the area in an attempt to intercept transports.

location for munitions to royalist forces in the north and as a destination for Yemeni tribal refugees.[63]

Prior to the end of the UNYOM, General Rikhye observed that rather than reducing troops, Nasser seemed to have been preparing to make a large-scale assault on royalists just as the UN mission was due to expire on September 4.[64] UN observers gathered information indicating substantial Egyptian and republican troop deployments in the planning of further large scale assaults on royalist positions.[65] The Saudis, however, did not need this report to realize that Egyptian troops were not withdrawing from Yemen and were reluctant to continue funding UNYOM for an additional two months, bringing an official end to the belligerent-funded mission.[66]

UNYOM – More than Meets the Eye

The UN mission in Yemen has been criticized not only for its failure to end hostilities in the region, but on the conditions of the UN staff, its restrictions on making contact with royalists, and the fact that it had no functional purpose other than to observe, and even that was done poorly and inefficiently.[67] Recently available UN archives have shed light on multiple aspects of the mission that counter these three purported deficiencies of the mission.

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[63] UN Archives, S-0656-0003, Folder 10, September 3, 1964.

[64] Library and Archives Canada, RG 24, Volume 21494, August 5, 1964.

[65] Library and Archives Canada, RG 24, Volume 21494, August 7, 1964. By the time of the withdrawal, there were 40,000 Egyptian troops which was a reduction from upwards of 70,000 before the mission. The smaller numbers, if accurate, were more a sign of limited royalist capacity rather than a concerted Egyptian effort to withdraw its forces.

[66] Schmidt, “The Civil War in Yemen,” 141.

[67] Jones, *Britain and the Yemen Civil War 1962-1965,* 71. Jones claims a “paucity in manpower and equipment that reflected the styptic nature of the mandate” and that “Von Horn was prohibited from establishing contact with forces loyal to the Imam.”

Von Horn and other critics of the UN mission have highlighted the meager rations and paltry conditions of UN officials in bases and outposts in the demilitarized zone between Saudi Arabia and the YAR. Von Horn blamed what he referred to as the "paucity of transport planes" leading to the "near starvation" of UN personnel.[68] During a visit with Canadian pilots in December 1963, Flight Lieutenant Peter Kelly, a medical officer for the Canadian Air Transport Command claimed that the supplies and conditions were so poor that "We in the RCAF have reached the peak of our endurance in the filthy living environment of Yemen."[69] Kelly's comments came at a time of heightened UN tensions as the Yugoslav ground forces were withdrawn leaving the bulk of the mission's responsibility in the hands of the RCAF, much to the indignation of the Canadian public that had been losing patience with their continued affinity for global peacekeeping.

Rumors of conditions in Yemen were greatly exaggerated leading UN officials and critics to believe the situation in Yemen was far worse than it actually was. RCAF Flight Lieutenant George E. Mayer, a 22 year old pilot serving in Yemen, recalled hearing rumors about working conditions in Yemen prior to his arrival. The flying was dangerous, the food was terrible, and the "Yemen Gut" travel diarrhea and vomiting was even worse. He had been told that "the outposts made the TV program MASH locations look like the Chateau Laurier."[70] Upon arrival in Sana'a, another Canadian

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[68] Von Horn, *Soldiering for Peace*, 383. In discussion with media during the mission, von Horn claimed that the personnel was near starvation and occasionally survived only on their doses of iron. (Yael Vered, *Hafikhah u-milḥamah be-Teman* (Tel Aviv: Am 'oved, 1967), 129).

[69] Gaffen, *In the Eye of the Storm*, 83.

[70] Mayer, George E., "134 ATU (Air Transport Unit), Sana'a Yemen 1962-3, June 24, 2013, http://www.115atu.ca/yem.htm. In Mayer's recollections he compares the gastrointestinal condition in El Arish, known as "Gyppo Gut" with that equivalent while serving on UNYOM, claiming that the illness in Yemen was much worse.

pilot remarked that the accommodations, located in an old palace that had been home to Imam Yahya's harem, were primitive, but certainly acceptable for UN standards.[71]

While there is no doubt that operating in temperatures that top 125 degrees Fahrenheit during the daytime can hardly be considered comfortable, the UN staff was not lacking, especially when considering the dire poverty experienced by most Yemenis. The base in Najran, for example, received weekly North Star air deliveries of mail, fresh fruits and vegetables and other supplies from the UNEF base in El Arish.[72] A close analysis of the shipment orders in the UN archives reveals a picture far different from the depraved conditions of UN staff.

The main complaint in many of the telegraphs from Najran, Hodeidah, and Sana'a was of the staff's boredom rather than its lack of resources. In response to several request for reading material and entertainment, headquarters granted six copies each of weekly newspapers including *Life*, *The NY Times*, *Time*, *Herald Tribune*, *Newsweek*, *Daily Telegraph* (London), charged to the UNYOM expense account. Along with the newspapers, UN headquarters also sent eight films including *Bye Bye Birdie*, *In the Piazza*, *Big Red*, *Come Fly with Me*, and *Ambush in Cameron Pass*.[73] A later request procured a new movie projector, loud speakers, cinemascope lens, spare parts, and transformer.[74] The projector came along with an additional collection of movies

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[71] Poole, Doug, "My 115 ATU RCAF Yemen Adventure," http://www.115atu.ca/yem.htm. Following the coup, this old palace had been converted into the Liberty Hotel, one of the few hotels in the city 1960s and presumably better than alternative options (UN Archives, S-0656-0002, Folder 5, June 22, 1963, von Horn to U Thant). The Liberty Hotel, however, could not accommodate the entirety of the UN staff, leaving a group of others to stay at the Viceroy Hotel, also a former palace that had since been converted into an American/European style bed and breakfast. (UN Archives, S-0656-0002, Folder 5, June 17, 1963, von Horn to Bunche).

[72] Gaffen, *In the Eye of the Storm*, 81.

[73] UN Archives, S-0656-0001, Folder 2, January 1, 1964, Gyani to Spinelli.

[74] UN Archives, S-0656-0002, Folder 7, September 30, 1964.

including *The Running Man*, *Wives and Lovers*, *The Mouse on the Moon*, *Come Blow Your Horn*, *Murder at the Gallop*, among other hit movies from 1963.[75]

In addition to being entertained with daily newspapers and current movies, UN staff also developed a penchant for heavy drinking and smoking. Telegrams from the various UN outposts in Yemen were sent, at least once a week, for shipments of beer and alcohol to either be charged to UNYOM's cash account or to their individual expense accounts. On several occasions UN headquarters responded: "Forwarding two Tuborgs [beer] ASAP"[76] One telegram to headquarters, perhaps in preparation for a heavy night of drinking, asked: "Please increase whisky request to four bottles for each of us." Some orders did not specify brand name, sufficing with a general request for beer, whisky, vodka, or "any other alcohol".[77] Other orders, however, were made by UN officials with a more epicurean taste. For example, Majors Paulson and Woskett requested an emergency airlift to Jizan of two bottles of Rémy Martin, a particularly expensive brand of cognac. Paulson and Woskett deemed this airlift, which was to include gin, vodka, and pipe tobacco as well, as an appropriate restitution from UN headquarters for not agreeing to ship the UNYOM station in Jizan a Christmas tree in December 1963.[78] Requests for beer and spirits were surpassed only by orders for cigarettes, specifically Phillip Morris brand.[79] Aside from a special meal order for Christmas dinner in December 1963, the content of these telegrams did not convey a

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[75] UN Archives, S-0656-0001, Folder 6, January 27, 1964.

[76] UN Archives, S-0656-0001, Folder 6, January 27, 1964. Tuborg refers to the Danish beer company.

[77] UN Archives, S-0656-0001, Folder 6, January 23, 1964, Sana'a to Hodeidah, Vanderboon. Order for increase in whisky rations. The other two examples occurred January 18 and 21.

[78] UN Archives, S-0656-0001, Folder 5, December 24, 1963, from Jizan to Jedda.

[79] UN Archives, S-0656-0001, Folder 1, December 1, 1963, from Jizan to base (Major Moe).

desperate need for food or any other staples. UN personnel in Yemen seemed to have a lot of leisure and downtime on their hands to drink and smoke heavily, watch movies, and read regularly, hardly the symptoms of a demoralized and depraved crew. Even General von Horn himself was often accompanied by two things that "never strayed far from his side: a beautiful blond Swedish secretary and bottle of his favourite malt beverage."[80]

Upon arriving in Sana'a, George Mayer was treated to four cold Amstel beers to make him feel at ease. He recounted a comical anecdote that demonstrated the centrality and importance of beer for UN personnel during his later stationing in Najran:

> "The focal point of Najran was the 450lb. kerosene fired double door fridge strategically located in the shady party area. On the left side was the Danish beer Tuborg and on the right side, my favourite Dutch Amstel beer. You were obliged to bow or salute whenever you passed it by! It was the junior man on the outpost that was charged with keeping it stocked and worth his hide if he didn't!"[81]

Any demoralization was mainly as a result of the Montreal Canadiens' playoff loss in April 1964. The Canadian pilots staffing UNYOM in 1964 spent a great deal of their leisure and work time receiving updates as to the scores and standings of the Montreal Canadiens and Toronto Maple Leafs during the course of the National Hockey League (NHL) playoffs. Over fifty telegrams were sent to UN bases in Yemen detailing the outcome of the most recent playoff game, the performance of the Detroit Red Wings hockey great Gordie Howe, and the eventual Stanley Cup victory of the Toronto Maple

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[80] Poole, "My 115 ATU RCAF Yemen Adventure." The blond Poole referred to was Dorothy Stevens, UNYOM's secretary and "a remarkable Scottish lady who was efficiency and dignity itself but could drink and swear like a trooper when necessity arose." (Von Horn, Carl, *Soldiering for Peace*, 329)

[81] Mayer, George E., "134 ATU (Air Transport Unit), Sana'a Yemen 1962-3, June 24, 2013. Mayer added that although he retells several humorous anecdotes, life in Yemen was not all fun and games. The missions were difficult and the conditions were less than ideal…but the beer was always in stock.

Leafs.[82] Despite the complaining, it seems that at least Canadian hockey fans had their priorities straight…

UNYOM was also accused of ignoring Yemeni royalists, thereby hampering the mission's ability to mediate a peaceful agreement taking all sides into account.[83] In reality, there were multiple visits to royalist bases, with the intention of explaining the UN mission and making Yemeni tribesmen familiar with the blue helmets and white planes of UN personnel. In August 1963, Saudi Prince Turki ibn Abdulaziz al Saud, the governor of Riyadh Province at the time, was asked by UN headquarters to make contact with royalists in Jizan on behalf of UNYOM. The announced purpose of the meeting was to explore royalist reactions to UN personnel and whether they would offer them protection.

[82] UN Archives, S-0657-007, Folder 6, April 1964.

[83] Schmidt, "The Civil War in Yemen,"146. He claims that UN should have suspended recognition until after the conclusion of the mission so as to keep the diplomatic channel open to both parties. Von Horn, *Soldiering for Peace*. Does not mention that extensive contacts with royalists in his memoirs, yet laments U Thant's restrictions regarding contact with royalists. Yael Vered, *Hafikhah u-milḥamah be-Teman* (Tel Aviv: Am 'oved, 1967), 128 claims that UNYOM made no contact whatsoever with royalists and pretended they did not exist. Fred Gaffen claims the mission was hampered by the inability to make contact with royalists (Gaffen, *In the Eye of the Storm*, 81). Birgisson argues that UNYOM officials could not make contact or accept complaints made by royalists, for fear that the mission would compromise its impartiality (Birgisson, "United Nations Yemen Observation Mission," 213).

Other accounts accused the UN of "acting as if the Royalists did not exist." (Meir Ossad, "Legal Aspects of the Egyptian Intervention in Yemen," *Israel Law Review* 5, 1970).

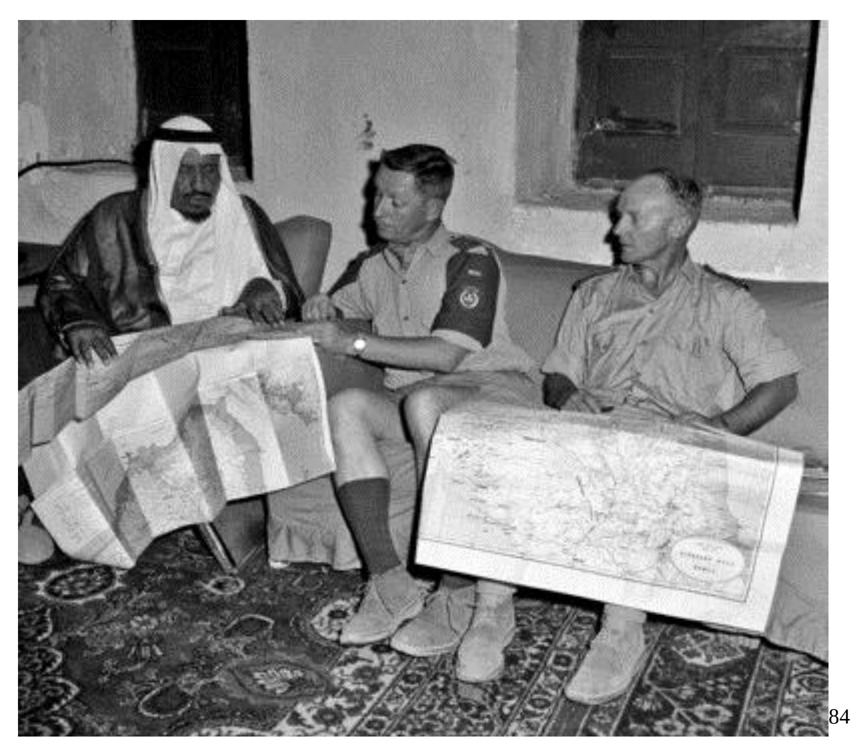

[84]

Fig. 5.3 Prince Turki meeting with UNYOM observers in Jizan, July 1963.

The meeting took place on August 21 in the Sa'dah area where UN Major Larry David, an American fluent in Arabic with long experience in the Middle East, met with royalist Hassan ibn Hussein. Together they crossed the Yemeni border at al-Kuba, needing to transfer from a jeep to a royalist Dodge Power Wagon, as the UN jeeps could not handle the terrain. Good hospitality was shown to Major David and royalist officials assured him that al-Badr would order the tribes not to harm UN officials and not to fire upon white planes. Royalist soldiers offered their own assessment of the power of Egyptian air supremacy in the Yemeni conflicts: "if the UAR aircraft were withdrawn from the Yemen, the royalists would solve the problem of the withdrawal of Egyptian troops," implying that Egyptian air support was the republic's only tactical advantage over royalist forces.[85]

[84] www.unmultimedia.org, UNYOM, June-July 1963.

[85] UN Archives, S-0657-0012, Folder 5, August 24, 1963, Major L.P. David to Deputy Commander UNYOM.

In October 1963, Major Nicholas Doughty, a member of the UNYOM personnel, traveled from Najran to the Yemeni district of al-Hashwa for a three day meeting with Prince Ali, the twenty-two year old first cousin of al-Badr who spoke English after studying economics for one year in the American University of Beirut. Ali described an apparent UAR military build-up northeast of Sa'dah and offered to escort UN observers to the outskirts of the Egyptian military site. In addition, given that UN officials were already arbitrating between Egyptians and royalists on prisoner exchange matters, Ali expressed a willingness to have UNYOM observers stationed on a semi-permanent basis in royalist areas. He explained that royalists held one hundred Egyptian prisoners and would be willing to submit to International Red Cross and UN inspections. Royalists were hoping to use these prisoners as bargaining chips to gain information on the Imam's family being held in Cairo and Sana'a. Ali claimed to have been provided with arms and intelligence from republican commanders and that the republican intention was to kill Egyptians, not Yemenis. Ali pledged to circulate the word to tribesmen not to fire on white UN aircraft, although he admitted that "it was often difficult to ensure disciplined acts by the tribesmen."[86]

André Rochat, the head of the delegation from the ICRC in Yemen, would later follow the UNYOM initiative in establishing a royalist-republican dialogue regarding prisoner exchange. Known by UN and ICRC insiders as the "bridge builder", Rochat secured freedom of movement for the ICRC between royalist and republican territories from 1964 through the end of the war. In 1967, Rochat's ICRC "bridge" managed to

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[86] UN Archives, S-0657-0012, Folder 5, October 13, 1963, Doughty, Najran to Operations. Doughty did not pass this statement about tribal behavior to the Canadians, because "it may spread alarm and despondency."

secure the exchange of all remaining prisoners of war, including Egyptian soldiers who had been held by northern tribes for upwards of four years.[87]

In his assessment of the meeting, Doughty suggested continuing talks with royalists as they occupied a central geographic position with access to the specific areas which appear to be the focus of the UN mission's attention. He suggested maintaining contact with Prince Ali and other royalists, while still retaining an unofficial status, in accordance with U Thant’s insistence in avoiding internal politics of the Yemeni conflict. In addition Doughty felt there was a need to increase "at least an awareness of what UN people look like, particularly among the tribesmen.” Furthermore, Doughty surmised that "if UAR were notified of UN presence in Hashwa area, the regular bombing might cease." Nonetheless, he admitted that there were some difficulties in maintaining regular contact with the royalist camp. The rough terrain of the al-Hashwa region would require the purchase of new vehicles for UN personnel and there was always a danger of UAR bombing despite UN presence. Doughty’s visit was highlighted by hours of dancing with the hill tribesmen. He showed off the blue UN helmets to three hundred chanting tribesmen who were "in line abreast coming down the wadi, each line led by a group of dagger waving dancers."[88]

Aside from David and Doughty’s accounts, several additional visits were made with royalist representatives. Pier P. Spinelli met with Imam al-Badr’s foreign minister in April 1964[89] and UN and Red Cross representatives visited with al-Badr in August

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[87] Richard Deming, *Heroes of the International Red Cross* (New York: ICRC, 1969), 196. ICRC visits to al-Badr’s mountain stronghold were to be limited to once per month.

[88] UN Archives, S-0657-0012, Folder 5, October 13, 1963, Doughty, Najran to Operations. Doughty described the dances as a mixture of "the Twist and Hop Step and Jump."

[89] UN Archives, S-0656-0001, April 25, 1964. Spinelli refused to meet with al-Badr in al-Hayat, Yemen because Cairo had criticized the timing and intentions of the meeting.

1964 to negotiate a prisoner exchange that was to take place in September.[90] According to Brian Pridham, from the perspective of the UN “the Imam’s side does not exist.”[91] Pridham observed an additional lack of understanding in that "the curt reference to "armed Royalist" is nonsense. All Yemenis in that area are by nature armed and royalist!”[92] The detailed documentation of UN contact with Yemeni royalists challenges the perception that the UN mission ignored them entirely.

The “observer” designation of the UNYOM has also been targeted as the reason for the mission’s failure as there was no Egyptian withdrawal to observe. While this might have been true for that component of the Bunker agreements, the UN mission was called upon to observe much more than just the planned withdrawals of Egyptian troops and Saudi support. An addendum to responsibilities of UNYOM included the investigation of regional incidents “where appropriate and possible”. The complaints that warranted UN investigation included two categories: UAR offensive actions against royalist positions in Yemen and on Saudi Arabian territory and accusations of Saudi aid being delivered to royalists in Yemen.[93]

The presence of UNYOM acted as a safety valve for Saudi Arabia and the UAR to let off steam without engaging each other. According to the UN observer log, both countries submitted dozens of complaints to local UN observer personnel. Most of these grievances sounded more like familial bickering, with half of Saudi communications naming a camel as the primary victim of a UAR bombing run.[94] To

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[90] UN Archives, S-0656-0003, Folder 10, August 5, 1964, weekly operations.

[91] Jones, *Britain and the Yemen Civil War*, 64.

[92] TNA, B.R. Pridham, FO 371/16885/BM 1071/93, August 13, 1963.

[93] UN Archives, S-5412, September 4, 1963.

[94] UN Archives, S-0057-0001, Folder 12, 1963, Chronological Action Files of Complaints.

ease regional tensions, UN observers or Yugoslavian military representatives would be sent to "investigate" at least half of the submitted allegation, a process that amounted to writing a few notes on an incident log.[95] Despite the lack of actionable responses to any of these incidents, the complaints continued to arrive at UN bases, a sign that even meager international attention was sought after and desired by the parties involved. Beyond the role of sanctioning diplomatic finger pointing, the UN observers were able to foster a working relationship with local officials with whom they consulted during their investigations.

June 1963, while the mission was only in a preliminary and understaffed stage, was nonetheless a particularly busy month for UN military observers. UN observers responded to UAR accusations of Saudi weapons transfers by documenting ammunition and gasoline dumps near towns along the Saudi-Yemeni border. UN observers responded to reports of UAR bombings in the Saudi border villages of Tamniah, Abha, and al-Hadira, where UNYOM representative Major B. Schaathun was accompanied by Saudi Lieutenant Colonel Katlan and Prince Abdullah al-Madi for thorough investigations. The team examined bomb fragments and interviewed survivors putting together a detailed report with photographs of property destruction and injury to civilians.[96]

On August 27, 1963, the village sheikh of al-Atam wrote to Saudi officials reporting that their cattle had been subject to artillery fire. Saudi officials passed on the information in the form of a former complaint. UN Major David arrived onsite where he was shown shell fragments from the artillery fire. Nearby, other UN observers toured the evacuated village of Halfa to investigate reports of an earlier bombing.

[95] *ibid.*

[96] UN Archives, S-0057-0001, Folder 3 and 4, June 1963.

While they were onsite Egyptian artillery started shooting in their vicinity and UNYOM officers had to lie on the ground and crawl towards Ta'ashar valley where they withdrew.[97] In another investigation on November 21, UN observers recorded the testimony of locals that UAR planes raided the Harah market, south of Jizan. Bombs and machine guns targeted the market causing injuries and damage to property. Onlookers claimed that the UAR planes followed a UN over flight by 5 minutes and flew back over UN headquarters in Najran "at a low altitude as if challenging the observers."[98]

These examples represent only a small number of the total complaints investigated by UN observers who served additional roles beyond observing the withdrawals of Egypt and Saudi Arabia. UN archival material counters the image of a dysfunctional mission. UNYOM did in fact play a significant role in mediating the Saudi-Egyptian conflict, managed to incorporate all sides involved and provided adequately for its personnel.

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[97] UN Archives, S-0057-0001, Folder 11, August 31, 1963, Captain Ibrahim Hamad, Saudi Liaison Officer to Major B. Schaathun UNYOM liaison officer. Twelve bombs were dropped and the bombing continued after UNYOM withdrawal.

Major David threatened to leave Yemen along with von Horn, but was convinced to stay on until October 23, 1963 (Parker T. Hart, *Saudi Arabia and the United States: Birth of a Security Friendship* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1998), 218).

[98] UN Archives, S-0656-0003, Folder 7, November 24, 1963, Captain Ibrahim Hamad, Saudi Liaison Officer to Major C.F. Wrede UNYOM liaison officer.

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Fig. 5.4 UN Major B. Schaathun (center) investigating UAR bombing at al-Abha, June 27, 1963 with Saudi Lieutenant Colonel Katlan (left) looking on.

[99] UN Archives, S-0057-0001, Folder 1, June 27, 1963.

Understanding UNYOM in Context

The discrepancies between the reality of the mission's activities and living conditions and the description offered by critics of UNYOM are at the core of understanding U Thant and the role the mission played in the conflict. Debate in the Security Council during the 1960s focused to a great extent on the cost-benefit analysis of Hammarskjöld-style peacekeeping and the transition to more cost effective and focused UN missions into combat zones.

The stark differences between von Horn's description of the starvation-like conditions of the UN outposts versus the college dorm-like environment of drinking, movie and sports watching, and smoking away leisure time portrayed in the archives, was as Canadian pilot Doug Poole explained, a matter of psychological perspective. Poole claimed that Canadian airmen were spoiled as "they have always been accustomed to going about the business of war, well lodged, well-fed, well-clothed and clean shaven. This mission would tax their mettle to the limit. The environment and the hygiene conditions found in this inhospitable climate would not be their only problem. It would be harder, and take them longer to cope with the mental challenges."[100] The sign welcoming new recruits to the mission's base in Sana'a, referred to the impressive three story structure as "The Twilight Zone," despite the fact that the building was staffed with a personal chef, water purifier (albeit somewhat late in coming), electricity, and an acceptable latrine, amenities that the great majority of which the local population could only dream.[101]

The negative outlook of UN personnel was more likely the result of disgruntled reactions to abusive UN leadership and general despondency with the UN mission.

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[100] Poole, "My 115 ATU RCAF Yemen Adventure."

[101] Mayer, "134 ATU, Sana'a."

Although he declared himself an advocate of UN staff and resigned from his post in protest over their conditions, General Carl von Horn was noted to have been in a perpetual foul mood and was often verbally abusive to UN personnel. During a pre-flight inspection of his Caribou in Sana'a, Doug Poole noticed a fresh bullet hole that caused him some concern. When von Horn arrived to ascertain as to the delay in takeoff, the following demonstrative episode occurred:

> "The Wing Commander took him around to the back of the Caribou and showed him the bullet hole. The General had got out of the wrong side of the bed and wasn't in a very good mood. He seldom was. He asked if the aircraft was alright to fly. The Wing Commander assured him it was. He told the General, the bullet had gone in on side of the aircraft and out the other, "without hitting anything important"…The General frowned and replied: "Then get in the God damned thing and fly it, what the hell do you think you're being paid for?"[102]

Beyond the confines of their headquarters, UN personnel reported being shocked by the disdain Egyptians harbored towards Yemenis. The thought that the UN mission was aiding the Egyptian cause, even indirectly, cast a negative light on UNYOM in the eyes of its personnel and critics. Doug Poole reported driving by two Egyptian guards on the way to the Sana'a airport and noticed them pointing to a decapitated Yemeni head mounted on a plank, laughing at a cigarette that they had placed dangling from the severed head's mouth.[103] Ian Umbach, who served as George Mayer's commanding officer in Yemen noted "the appearance each morning of a freshly severed head over the main gate to the city," a sign, according to Umbach, that Yemen was still in the Middle Ages.[104] On a different occasion, a group of four Canadian pilots was shocked

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[102] Poole, "My 115 ATU RCAF Yemen Adventure." Wing Commander Olsen left Yemen shortly after this episode. (Von Horn, Carl, *Soldiering for Peace*, 368). Von Horn's outburst does not differ from military talk in general, but was sufficiently harsh to be noted with surprise by UNYOM personnel.

[103] Poole, "My 115 ATU RCAF Yemen Adventure."

[104] Umbach, Ian, "134 ATU in Yemen."

by the abuse that Mustafa, a senior Egyptian administrator in Sana'a, inflicted upon his Yemeni barber. Mustafa reprimanded him for being late, then slapped him and kicked him multiple times a demonstration of what Poole noted was an imposed hierarchy of Egyptians and Yemenis.[105]

Many UN officials and personnel felt that the General Assembly and the US "stumbled into premature recognition of Sallal's republic," and was now in political bind supporting the perceptibly weaker side of an internationalized civil war.[106] Although they may have felt uneasy about the organization's political stance, U Thant's political options towards the royalist campus was limited. Following the US recognition of the YAR on December 16, 1962, the UN had been given the green-light to recognize the Yemeni republic as well. On December 20, the General Assembly voted 74 to 4 with 23 abstentions to approve the Credential Committee's recommendation to seat the YAR delegates as the official representatives of Yemen. Given the official UN decision recognizing the republicans, Thant and UNYOM could not openly incorporate royalist officials and opinions into the specifics of the mission without violating the General Assembly's decision. Lieutenant General P.S. Gyani needed to be reminded of this fact by Ralph Bunche when assuming the head position of UNYOM in September 1963: "Limit contact with royalists out of concern that the UN might be legitimizing other government than YAR."[107]

US Secretary of State Dean Rusk justified UNYOM for reasons that had to do with Saudi royal stability. According to Rusk, the UN mission gave the Saudi regime the

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[105] Poole, "My 115 ATU RCAF Yemen Adventure."

[106] UN Archives, S-0656-0001, Folder 4, November 1, 1963, Samper to Spinelli. The opinion was a reaction to a *Daily Telegraph* editorial.

[107] UN Archives, S-0656-0003, Folder 2, September 11, 1963, Bunche to Gyani. Bunche further elaborated that "UNYOM has no mediation, investigation, inspection functions not directly related to the observation responsibilities."

time it needed to stabilize the monarchy in transition. Saud had served as King of Saudi Arabia since November of 1953 and was being pressured to give way to his brother Faisal. Although the actual transition of power did not occur until 1964, the relative calm fostered by the presence of the UN mission in Yemen allowed Faisal to assume many of the royal responsibilities from his brother Saud without worrying about unrestrained Egyptian incursions into Saudi territory.[108]

In a window into the thinking of Thant's inner circle, Gyani noted that UAR military action has made the republic even more unpopular to the extent that the YAR cannot even collect taxes to pay full salary to its employees. He suggested that the UN could serve as an advisory role to the YAR in the place of Egypt, seeing this as an alternative to the UNYOM mission in its present form.[109] It is evident from Gyani's suggestion of stationing a permanent UN financial consultant in Yemen that he understood the true purpose of UNYOM, simply having a presence in Yemen.

Gyani was replaced in November 1963, after two months as interim head of the mission, by Spinelli, the first civilian UN official to lead a military mission. U Thant's logic in Spinelli's appointment further explained his grand vision for UNYOM: "It was desirable that the mission of military observation with its limited mandate should be complemented by a United Nations political presence, which, by exploratory conversations with the parties concerned, might be able to play a more positive role in encouraging the implementation of the disengagement agreement and peace and security in the region."[110] In appointing a civilian, U Thant was also thinking beyond the UNYOM to perhaps maintaining a permanent UN aid mission in Yemen dedicated

[108] Library and Archives Canada, RG 24 – Volume 21494, September 26, 1963.

[109] UN Archives, S-0656-0003, Folder 2, October 2, 1963, Gyani to Bunche.

[110] Jones, "UNYOM: The Forgotten Mission."

to the establishment of health and education facilities. Sallal and Baydani would later reject this offer, fearing that a UN presence would undermine Egyptian support of the republic.[111]

In the early months of the mission, Thant indicated to the Security Council that he had envisioned the mission as an "intermediary and endorser of good faith on behalf of the parties concerned."[112] In hindsight, despite the increase in the number of Egyptian troops in Yemen, the withdrawal of UNYOM was followed by a series of direct diplomatic negotiations between Egypt and Saudi Arabia and royalist and republican camps as well. Mediation efforts that included Bunche, Bunker, von Horn, Spinelli and other UN officials acted to reduce inter-Arab tensions and keep open the possibility of a diplomatic solution.

[111] Yael Vered, *Hafikhah u-milḥamah be-Teman* (Tel Aviv: Am ‘oved, 1967), 87-88.

[112] UN Archives, S-0656-0003, Folder 7, September 24, 1963, Thant to Security Council.

Chapter 6: Nasser's Cage

The first two years of the Yemeni civil war (September 1962 - September 1964) were characterized by international attempts to encourage the withdrawal of Egypt and Saudi Arabia from the domestic Yemeni conflict. Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser appealed for diplomacy after each successful offensive, hoping that international pressure would help the United Arab Republic (UAR) and the Yemen Arab Republic (YAR) hold on to their territorial gains by establishing a ceasefire. At each diplomatic juncture, royalist tribal supporters of the deposed Imam al-Badr came back down from their mountainous refuge and pushed the Egyptian frontline positions back to the general confines of the "strategic triangle" of Sana'a, Ta'iz, and Hodeidah. Rather than face negotiating from a position of relative weakness inflicted by the royalist counteroffensive, Nasser repeatedly renewed his offensive, reneging on international commitments for a ceasefire and troop withdrawal.

The economic costs of the continued occupation in Yemen and the political criticism of Egyptian General 'Abd al-Hakim Amer for high casualties and military failure weighed down on Nasser's regime.[1] At the second Arab Summit in September 1964, Nasser and Saudi King Faisal once again declared their desire for mutual withdrawal. Rather than renew the Egyptian offensive when the royalists attacked in October 1964, Nasser chose to hold on to defensive positions and organize additional meetings that included representatives from both the republican and royalist camps. The peace conferences, highlighted by the Saudi-Egyptian Jeddah Pact in August 1965 and the Yemeni National Conference in Haradh in November 1965, created expectations for reconciliation.

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[1] LBJ Library, NSF, Country File, Yemen, Cables & Memos, Vol. II, 7 /64-1 2/68. The war costs an average of at least $60 million per year and had already inflicted at least 5,000 casualties and extensive losses in equipment.

By the end of 1965, however, Nasser's policy in Yemen took a reverse course, renewing the Egyptian occupation in what was called the "long-breath strategy". UAR troops garrisoned the "strategic-triangle" and interconnecting road network, relying on an intensive aerial bombing campaign that would feature the indiscriminate use of chemical weapons to subdue royalist tribal supporters. The reversal of the Egyptian withdrawal from Yemen has been described as a reaction to British colonial policy, Saudi-Iran relations, and renewed royalist attacks against Egyptian troops. This chapter argues, instead, that both the US and the USSR encouraged Nasser to remain in Yemen in an effort to confine Egyptian military power. Even amidst Cold War tensions, President Johnson and Secretary Brezhnev found themselves following similar policies towards Nasser in Yemen, in an effort to forestall a superpower nuclear conflict over an Egyptian-Israeli war.

Haradh Conference and Political Turmoil in Yemen

The Montaza Palace in Alexandria, Egypt served as the venue for the second Arab Summit in September 1964, a demonstration of Arab unity and reconciliation. After reopening diplomatic relations in the months following the first Arab Summit in Cairo in January 1964, Nasser and Faisal declared their willingness to bring the Yemeni conflict to a resolution.[2] According to a Soviet account of the September 1964 Summit, although the topic of normalizing Saudi-YAR relations was discussed, Saudi Prince Faisal did not give a definitive answer. There was, however, universal

[2] Adeed Dawisha, *Arab Nationalism in the Twentieth Century: From Triumph to Despair* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 246. The Cairo and Alexandria Summit were photo-ops for Arab "reconciliation" between Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia, creating a massive media spectacle.

agreement on the Arab anti-imperialist stance and the overt support for anti-British nationalist forces in Aden, Cyprus, and Oman.[3]

The Arab Summit followed the success of the Egyptian Haradh Offensive and the capture of the royalist base of Qarah in August 1964. Nasser was intent on establishing a ceasefire to secure the territorial gains north and east of the "strategic triangle". From October 30 through November 4, Nasser and Faisal met in the summer hilltop resort in Erkowit, Sudan to negotiate the mutual withdrawal of Egyptian and Saudi support from Yemen according to similar parameters of the original Ellsworth Bunker agreements of 1963. The royalists were represented by Ahmad Muhammad al-Shami and the republicans by Muhammad Mahmud al-Zubayri, one of the founders of the original Free Yemeni movement. All parties agreed on a ceasefire to take effect on November 6, 1964 with a Yemeni National Council planned for November 23. There was an understanding among the attendees that both Sallal and al-Badr would be forced to step down during the course of forming the new Yemeni government.

As had been the pattern in the previous two years, royalist forces that had previously retreated to the northern highlands came back down from the mountains to reclaim territory lost during the Egyptian Haradh Offensive. The description of these battles in Western media was analogous to a heroic Maccabean effort of the few royalists against the many Egyptians. For example, during the battle with Egyptians on the northeastern mountain of Jabal Razih, royalist forces numbered only 1,600 tribesmen facing three times that number of Egyptian soldiers and armor. The royalist assault was able to recruit 7,000 additional Hajuri mountaineer militiamen in five hours by "ordering the

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[3]*Blizhnevostochnyĭ konflikt: iz dokumentov arkhi͡va vneshneĭ politiki Rossiĭskoĭ Federat͡sii*, vol. 2 (Moscow: Mezhdunarodnyĭ fond "Demokratii͡a", 2003), 440-441. AVPRF, Fond 059, Opis 50, Papka 49, Dela 204, List 188-195, Erofeev UAR telegram to USSR Foreign Office, September 13, 1964. Saudi Arabia was clandestinely supporting British-royalist efforts while openly preaching an anti-British rhetoric.

Hajuri tribal war drum mobilization message to be circulated," and capturing the last two northern Egyptian strongholds at the top of Jabal Razih on December 31, 1964.[4] This battle epitomized the futility of the Haradh Offensive, originally intended to capture or kill Imam al-Badr by any means necessary. Although the summer of 1964 had been Imam al-Badr's "blackest days" during which he developed a nagging neurosis and a raging carbuncle, he emerged triumphantly in December 1964 to declare yet again that "Yemen will be Nasser's graveyard."[5]

Nasser's setbacks were not limited to the battlefield, as segments of Yemeni republicans referred to as "moderates," were growing increasingly frustrated with the ongoing civil war and the continued presence of Egyptian troops in Yemen. Several leaders formed opposition parties to Sallal's regime, constituting the movement that became known as the "third-force". Sayyid Ibrahim Ali al-Wazir, of the historic rival clan to the Hamid al-Din family for the position of Imam, was the first to form an opposition to Sallal in the form of the Union of Popular Forces, an ill-structured and short-lived political party.[6]

Al-Zubayri, who had served as a minister on Sallal's cabinet, subsequently formed the *Party of Allah* and left Sana'a to recruit tribal supporters in the northern and northeastern Yemeni highlands. The stated goal of Zubayri's party was to rid Yemen of the Egyptian military occupation and oust Sallal and his government. Zubayri and his "third-force" supporters envisioned retaining the structure of a republic equally divided between royalist and republican supporters. Although groups within the "third-

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[4] Bruce Conde, "British Committee For Relief Of Yemeni Wounded Honored By Overprints On Three Air," *Linn's Weekly Stamp News*, March 21, 1966, 10.

[5] George de Carvalho, "Yemen's Desert Fox," *Life Magazine,* February 19, 1965,

[6] Abdullah bin Ahmad al-Wazir had been declared Imam, albeit only for several weeks, following the 1948 assassination of Imam Yahya. This ill-structured party was short-lived as Sayyid Ibrahim was exiled to the US where he resided until 1991.

force" suggested reviving the concept of a constitutional monarchy, most agreed that the Hamid al-Din family should not remain in power.[7] Qadi ‘Abd al-Rahman al-Iryani, who would later serve as the head of state for the YAR from 1967-1974 and oversee the Yemeni reconciliation, was considered, along with Ahmad Muhammad Nu'man and Zubayri as one of the founding fathers of the concept of a Yemeni republic and a leader of the "third force". His formal title of "Qadi", or religious judge, underscored his role as the bridge between the traditional imamate and the modern Yemeni state.[8]

Several secret meetings between royalist and republican representatives took place between November 1964 and March 1965. Egyptian authorities reportedly became alarmed at the content of these meeting and arranged the assassination of Zubayri on April 1, 1965[9], in the hopes that it would bring the "third-force" movement to a premature end. Other accounts of Zubayri's assassination blame Prince Hassan who may have been alarmed by Zubayri's popularity amongst the royalist tribes.[10]

Popular protest and Hashid and Bakil tribal federations' threats of marching on Sana'a in the aftermath of Zubayri's assassination pressured Sallal to appoint Nu'man as Prime Minister of the YAR, in the hopes that it would appease the opposition. As prime minister, Nu'man wrested much of Sallal's presidential power and organized a

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[7] Burrowes, Robert D. *Historical Dictionary of* Yemen (Lanham, Md. : Scarecrow Press, 2010), 19. Members of the "third-force" established a center for operations in exile in Lebanon that featured members of the al-Wazir clan and another prominent Egyptian-opposition leader Ahmad Jabr al-Afif, who would serve as the Yemeni Education Minister during the 1970s. Al-Afif was accused of corruption and misuse of foreign aid. Later in his life, al-Afif founded the al-Afif Cultural foundation and became a vocal proponent of the anti-qat movement. (http://www.y.net.ye/alafif)

[8] Burrowes, *Historical Dictionary of Yemen*, 197. Iryani was nicknamed the "republican Imam" and was given a hero's burial upon his death in 1998.

[9] Schmidt, *Yemen*, 226. Two suspect were arrested and implicated Egypt in the assassination. Their stories were corroborated when Egyptian local authorities helped them escape from prison.

[10] Yael Vered, *Hafikhah u-milḥamah be-Teman* (Tel Aviv: Am ‘oved, 1967), 220.

National Peace Conference in Khamir, a hilltop village thirty miles north of Sana'a in May 1965.[11] YAR Prime Minister Mohsin al-'Ayni expressed a great deal of optimism for Nu'man's government and the success of the national conference, as he believed an Egyptian withdrawal would follow.[12] This belief was based upon a letter received from Nasser around the time of the Khamir conference. In the text of the letter, Nasser makes it unequivocally clear that he intends to withdraw Egyptian forces as early as July 1965. He blamed the burdens of continued support of the revolution and international criticism of Egypt as a colonial power in Yemen.[13]

The conference featured more the five thousand tribal notables and produced the first modern constitution intended for the whole Yemeni state. Yemen would become an Islamic Republic, with a strong assembly that could overrule the president, and would raise an eleven-thousand member People's Army to replace the Egyptian forces upon which the current YAR was dependent. Iryani, the chairman of the conference, planned to seek Saudi recognition and support, supplanting Egyptian forces, Sallal's regime, and al-Badr's source of financial and logistical support. Rather than acquiesce to Nu'man's political demands, Sallal rejected the power-sharing measures, a clear sign that he was reluctant to compromise with the "third-force". In protest of Sallal's alleged violation of the Yemeni constitution, Nu'man resigned on July 1, 1965 and flew to Cairo with forty supporters, including Iryani, to protest. In response, Nu'man and his group were barred from returning to Yemen, allowing Sallal sufficient time to form a new government, naming himself the interim prime minister and president.

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[11] Manfred W. Wenner, "The Civil War in Yemen, 1962-70," in *Stopping the Killing,* ed. Roy Licklider (New York : New York University Press, 1993), 105.

[12] FRUS, 1964–1968 Vol XXI, Near East Region; Arabian Peninsula, Doc 369, April 30, 1965, Telegram From the Embassy in Yemen to the Department of State.

[13] Mohsin A. Alaini, *Fifty Years in Shifting Sands: Personal Experience in the Building of a Modern State in Yemen* (Beirut, Lebanon: Dar An-Nahar, 2004), 104.

Nasser's assassination of Zubayri and confinement of Nu'man and the "third-force" leaders to Cairo was intended to remove the major political opposition to the Sallal regime. This brash political move was not, however, accompanied by immediate plans for an Egyptian offensive to regain lost territory north and east of the "strategic triangle". The royalist offensive continued unabated from March through August 1965 driving Egyptian away from Jawf and Mishriq and leaving them with only two surrounded outposts in Sa'dah and Hajjah.[14] Rather than immediately reinforcing his troops in Yemen, Nasser began the gradual withdrawal of his army and traveled to Jeddah for yet another meeting with Faisal. Before setting out to Saudi Arabia, Nasser gathered Nu'man and his supporters for a frank conversation about the future of the Egyptian presence in Yemen. At the end of the meeting even Nu'man, who surely held some disdain for his forced exile in Cairo, sincerely believed that Nasser intended to bring the war in Yemen to a close and withdraw his troops.[15]

The Jeddah Pact, signed on August 23, 1965 between Nasser and Saudi King Faisal, seemed to be Nasser's appeal for a respite from the war.[16] The Egyptian military was hemorrhaging funds, munitions, and soldiers and had little tangible success to show. According to the agreement, Egyptian forces would withdraw by September 1966 and Faisal would deny Saudi territory and resources to royalist armies. Plans were put in place for a second Yemeni tribal meeting in Haradh in November 1965, with a Yemeni plebiscite scheduled for November 1966. Al-Badr reportedly ordered his troops to maintain an offensive ceasefire without ceding any of the gained territory, until after

[14] Bruce Conde,"Free Yemen's ICY Set Pays Tribute to Saudi Arabian Aid; First Of Haradh Rush Series," *Linn's Weekly Stamp News*, June 20, 1966, 33.

[15] O'Ballance, *The War in Yemen*, 150.

[16] Stanko Guldescu, "Yemen: The War and the Haradh Conference," *The Review of Politics* 28, 1966, 323.

the outcome of the second Haradh conference. Sallal responded in kind by freeing political prisoners, although was soon forced to leave for medical care in Cairo after being shot by an "irate Yarimi tribesmen while staging a bogus 'save the republic' rally at Dhammar replete with imported 'applause' and slogan-shouters."[17] The atmosphere at the November 24, 1965 Haradh II Conference was optimistic as Nasser had visibly been withdrawing troops and the mutual ceasefire was being upheld by both sides. Spirits were not dampened when republican and royalist delegates could not agree on the future of the Yemeni Imamate after a month-long meeting, agreeing to reconvene after Ramadan on February 20, 1966. However, the second rounds of talks did not occur.[18] Within weeks of the Haradh II conference, Egyptian reinforcements were sent and Nasser offensive began once again in earnest.

As the Egyptian army was rolled back from its positions north and east of the "strategic triangle" Nasser appeared to be withdrawing from Yemen with the intention of redeploying his troops in Sinai for a confrontation with Israel.[19] He wanted to prepare for an attack on Israel, but also needed to uphold Egyptian during the withdrawal. Several reasons have been suggested to account for the sudden reversal in policy in the end of 1965 and the failure of the Haradh II peace overtures. Republican intransigence and refusal to compromise on the republican nature of the state has often been cited as the primary reason.[20] The declared "ceasefire" itself was officially broken by royalist forces, partially as a response to the barring of Hamid al-Din families from

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[17] Bruce Conde, "Free Yemen's ICY Set Pays Tribute To Saudi Arabian Aid; First Of Haradh Rush Series," *Linn's Weekly Stamp News*, June 20, 1966, 33. Conde reported hearing about the shooting and the popular protests on Radio Sana'a.

[18] O'Ballance, *The War in Yemen*, 155.

[19] O'Ballance, *The War in Yemen*, 156.

[20] F. Gregory Gause, *Saudi-Yemeni Relations: Domestic Structures and Foreign Influence* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 69.

the Haradh I and II Conferences. Nasser's renewed offensive in 1966 was a response to the insulting nature of royalist attacks on a withdrawing army in order to improve their postwar position.[21] The renewed offensive has also been attributed to Marshal 'Abd al-Hakim Amer, who purportedly sabotaged the Haradh conference to give his military solution to the conflict another chance.[22]

Other accounts of the war have blamed the Saudi diplomatic overtures with the Iranian Shah in December 1965 and the attempts to form an Islamic alliance against Arab Nationalism even as King Faisal was negotiating a peace settlement with Nasser.[23] In 1966 Saudi Arabia was the recipient of large and unprecedented military contracts from the US and Britain.[24] The Anglo-American air defense program from 1966-1967, worth $400 million offered the Saudis a package that included British Aircraft Corporation (BAC) Lightning planes, radars and communication equipment, 150 American Hawk surface-to-air missiles (SAM), and British training and support service. While the defense program was being installed, Faisal also purchased 37 British Thunderbird I SAMs and fifteen former RAF planes to be flown and serviced temporarily by British pilots. Although the defense system failed to prevent UAR aerial bombing of Saudi border territory, the large arms purchase presented a potential challenge to Nasser's military supremacy in the region.[25]

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[21] Schmidt, *Yemen*, 210. Badeeb blamed Yemeni corruption for undermining Saudi-Egyptian peace efforts (Badeeb, Saeed M., *The Saudi-Egyptian Conflict over North Yemen* 1962-1970,(Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1986), 133).

[22] Nadav Safran, *Saudi Arabia: The Ceaseless Quest for Security* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), 120.

[23] Zayd ibn 'Alī Wazīr, *Muḥāwalah li-fahm al-mushkilah al-Yamanīyah* (Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Risālah, 1971), 173. Ferris bases his analysis on a single article from *The Observer* in 1965 (Ferris, Jesse *Nasser's Gamble*, 254).

[24] Wenner, "The Civil War in Yemen," 106.

[25] Safran, *Saudi Arabia*, 201-202.

Saudi Arabia was not the only regional power to recognize Nasser's weakened position, both in Yemen and in the Middle East in general. Responding to a royalist visit to Tehran in 1963, Mohammed Reza Shah Pahlavi sent the first group of Iranians to Jabal Ahmar in Yemen on April 30, 1965 to ostensibly observe the circumstances of the civil war.[26] Royalist Prince Mohammed ibn al-Hussein made his own trip to Iran in October 1966 to ask the Shah for heavy weaponry, Iranian military trainers, and space for royalist training in Iran. In addition, Prince Mohammed broached the possible use of Iranian airlifts and parachuting to resupply besieged royalist troops. The Shah agreed to the requests and pledged to organize three parachute drops and the transport of heavier material by land through Saudi Arabian territory. Royalist tribesmen were invited to Tehran to be trained in medical, combat, and sabotage, while Iranian trainers were sent to royalist camps in Yemen.[27] Iranian aid for the royalists was concerning for both Nasser and the Saudis, who expressed their willingness to forsake al-Badr and his supporters for the sake of Arab unity.[28] Neil McLean conducted his own trip to Tehran with a substantial request for military aid. A portion of this shipment was received in October 1967, during a period where Iran was acting as the sole suppliers of royalist forces.[29]

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[26] IWM, Neil McLean Files, Box 36, Brown Book, Jan-Jun 1965, McLean's diary of 1965 visit to Yemen. Imam al-Badr's original appeal to the Shah of Iran in 1963 was used as leverage to obtain a greater level of support from Saudi Arabia who was reluctant to allow the expansion of Iranian influence on the Peninsula.

[27] IWM, Neil McLean Files, Box A, Green Government of Aden File. McLean had this conversation with Prince Mohammed when he returned from Iran in November 1966.

[28] Bissell, "Soviet Use of Proxies in the Third World," 97. Iranian involvement was not merely a matter of military aid and supremacy. The religious component, or the Shi'ite network on Iranians and Zaydi Yemenis was of particular concern to the Saudis who were Sunni.

[29] Jones, *Britain and the Yemen Civil*, 219.

The most repeated explanation for Nasser's decision to maintain a large contingent of troops was the issuing of the British 1966 White Paper on Defence, declaring a withdrawal from Aden and the Federation of South Arabia (FSA) by 1968, the logic of which will be explained in the next chapter. Nasser allegedly perceived the British decision as a way to salvage an otherwise disastrous military expedition by expanding his influence over South Arabia following the British withdrawal.[30] This theory was supported by the reported redeployment of Egyptian forces to the southern border with the FSA.[31]

There is no denying the fact that, as John Badeau described: "Most Arab countries seemed content to let President Nasser wrestle with his own difficulties in Yemen and watched King Feisal's increasingly effective opposition to the UAR with quiet approbation."[32] Focusing solely on regional actors, however, neglects to consider the broader geostrategic interests of the US and the USSR as a major factor in convincing Nasser to remain in Yemen. For the first years of the civil war, Soviets supported the Egyptian occupation of Yemen with air munitions, loans, and diplomatic capital for the defense of UAR actions in the UN. In contrast, the official US position under President Kennedy advocated withdrawal, containment, and mediation even as Nasser's continued military presence in Arabia was quietly sanctioned. Rather than championing the Haradh conferences and the Jeddah Pact as the culmination of years of international diplomacy in the region, the new administrations of Johnson and Brezhnev renewed support for Nasser and even encouraged him to maintain a

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[30] O'Ballance, *The War in Yemen*, 156.

[31] Rory Cormac, *Confronting the Colonies: British Intelligence and Counterinsurgency* (London: Hurst & Company, 2013), 134.

[32] Badeau, John S., *The American Approach to the Arab World* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), 145.

continued presence in a country that acted as a drain on Egypt's economy and as a cage of Nasser's Arab Nationalist foreign policy. Even at the height of the Cold War, the two superpowers realized the danger of unleashing Nasser's unbridled military on the Sinai Peninsula and the politically charged conflict with Israel.

Ibrahim al-Wazir, a prominent member of the Yemeni "third-force" was one of the few to understand the significance of this policy: "Both East and West are now kindling the resumption of the war in Yemen, paying no heed to who kills whom. The Communists are supplying the Egyptians with weapons whereas some Western countries are supplying them with wheat and dollars."[33] Al-Wazir further charged Nasser with cowardliness by keeping his army in Yemen to avoid a confrontation with Israel.[34]

[33] Guldescu, "Yemen: The War," 327.

[34] *Al Nadwa*, April 7, 1966. *Al Nadwa* was Mecca's official newspaper. Al-Wazir blamed Israel as well for a conspiracy to keep Nasser occupied in Yemen.

Soviet Relations with the YAR

Nikita Khrushchev was removed from power in October 1964 and replaced by Leonid Brezhnev as first secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) and by Alexei Kosygin as premier. Khrushchev had been accused by members of the Soviet Politburo of indiscriminate support for nationalist governments, such as the UAR. There was considerable concern among Nasser's administration that military and economic aid would be curtailed and that Brezhnev might demand loan repayment. During a speech on December 24, 1964 Alexander Shelepin, the former head of the KGB, laid these concerns to rest by making it clear that Soviet support for the UAR would continue unabated.[35]

Following the August 1965 Jeddah Agreement with Saudi Arabia, Nasser flew to Moscow and obtained a massive military-aid package in which the Soviets offered to underwrite Nasser's continued military presence in Yemen. Two more shiploads of Soviet munitions including 50,000 machine guns and an additional 6,000 Egyptian troops arrived in Hodeidah while the Haradh II conference was still in session. The UAR became the first country outside of Eastern Europe to receive MIG-21D jet fighters (twenty of them in total). The USSR wrote off Egyptian debt of $400 million for military equipment and concluded a trade agreement that promised Egypt shipments of Soviet machines, minerals, oil, wheat, wood, etc.[36] According to Muhammad Heikal, Nasser's confidant and a prominent Egyptian journalist, the debt forgiveness was

[35] Aryeh Yodfat, *Arab Politics in the Soviet Mirror* (Jerusalem: Israel Universities Press, 1973), 13.

[36] Guldescu, "Yemen: The War," 325.

granted after Nasser demonstrated to Leonid Brezhnev that the debt was directly related to Yemeni civil war arms purchases.[37]

The Soviets may have been relieved to have Nasser occupied in Yemen as a similar stance of aggression against Israel would have involved the USSR in another high-stakes confrontation with the US.[38] In a different sense, by 1965, Egypt was no longer as asset to Moscow, but rather had become a burden. Nasser had outlived his usefulness after helping the USSR establish a foothold in South Arabia and Africa and was deemed expendable.[39] Moscow could not turn its back entirely on its unpredictable Egyptian ally out of concern that Nasser would foster a closer relationship with Prime Minister Zhou El-Lai, whom he met in late 1963.[40] With one hand Moscow was pushing Nasser back into Yemen and with the other it was developing a closer relationship with Yemenis through direct military and economic aid, preparing for the post-Nasser Yemen republic.

The Soviet foreign office envisioned Yemen as a base and a staging post for further Soviet expansion into the Arabian Peninsula and post-colonial Africa at the expense of Western interests.[41] The completion of the Hodeidah port by 1961 and the construction

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[37]Muhammad Haykal, *The Sphinx and the Commissar: The Rise and Fall of Soviet Influence in the Middle East* (New York: Harper & Row, 1978), 146-7. Haykal claims this number to be $500 million.

[38] Stephen Page, *The USSR and Arabia: The development of Soviet policies and attitudes towards the countries of the Arabian peninsula 1955-1970* (London: The Central Asian Research Centre, 1971), 75.

[39]Ali Abdel Rahman Rahmy, *The Egyptian Policy in the Arab World: Intervention in Yemen 1962-1967 Case Study* (Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1983), 235.

[40] Oles M. Smolansky, *The Soviet Union and the Arab East Under Khrushchev* (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 1974), 263. Smolansky explains that Sino-Soviet tensions were a major factor in the Soviet decision to maintain a close alliance with Egypt.

[41] Adeed Dawisha, "The Soviet Union in the Arab World: The Limits to Superpower Influence," in *The Soviet Union in the Middle East: Policies and Perspectives*, ed. Adeed Dawisha and Karen Dawisha (London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1982), 16. Sana'a and

of a modern airport near Sana'a in 1963 were an essential component.[42] On March 21, 1964, a Treaty of Friendship between the USSR and YAR was signed in Moscow as a reaffirmation of the original treaties signed in 1928 and 1955.[43] The direct relationship with the Yemeni republic obviated the reliance on an Egyptian intermediary.

The Soviet naval base in Hodeidah was in line with the doctrine of Sergei Gorshkov, the Admiral of the Fleet of the Soviet Union since 1956. Gorshkov's *The Sea Power of the State*, had a profound influence on Soviet naval strategy in a similar manner that Alfred Mahan's *The Influence of Sea power Upon History* had on US naval doctrine in the early 20th Century.[44] Like Mahan, Gorshkov argued that the future of the land empire of the USSR was at sea. Only with a powerful navy could the USSR protect the revolution and support liberation movements across the globe. Naval staff stationed at these ports would function as cultural ambassadors, organizing sports and other activities for the local population.[45] He emphasized the peacetime military-political role of the Soviet navy in "protecting state interests", specifically Soviet state economic, political and military interests in the Third World.[46] The Hodeidah port and the Soviet presence in South Arabia was part of Gorshkov's vision of a strong naval presence in

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Hodeidah were perfectly situated as a refueling station en-route to East Africa (Page, *The USSR and Arabia*).

[42] RGANI, Fond 5, Opis 30, Dela 452, List 4, October 3, 1963. Both in response to and in an effort not to be outdone by American efforts to court the Yemeni regime, the Soviet team of technicians undertook the expansion of the Yemeni international airport in Sana'a, a project that was also completed by October.

[43] United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 553, 1966, 272-274. Copied in its entirety in Rahmy, *The Egyptian Policy in the Arab World*, 311-13.

[44] Donald Chipman, "Admiral Gorshkov and the Soviet Navy," *Air and Space Power Journal*, July-August 1982.

[45] S. G. Gorshkov, *The Sea Power of the State* (Annapolis, Maryland, 1979), 39.

[46] Robert G. Patman, *The Soviet Union in the Horn of Africa*: *The Diplomacy of intervention and disengagement* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 82.

the Red Sea region and near the Horn of Africa. This Indian Ocean region was envisioned as the "epicenter of the national liberation movement."[47]

Soviet diplomat Oleg Peresypkin explained that because Soviet ships were going from Odessa to the Far East via the Indian Ocean, "we need to have friendly relations with the littoral states. We had, and do have, some economic interests there. We had, or have, trade offices in Hodeida, Jidda, Massawa, Djibouti and Port Sudan – some of them were set up as early as the 1920s."[48] As Soviet Admiral, Gorshkov personally oversaw the expansion of Soviet naval influence in the region and joint Egyptian-Soviet strategic interests in the Mediterranean and Red Seas.[49] The Mediterranean and Indian Oceans also became scenes of Cold War tensions as the US deployed nuclear submarines there in 1962, the Polaris and the Poseidon, with the capability to target Soviet cities.[50]

Until his presumed death during the coup on September 26, 1962, Moscow was cultivating a close relationship with al-Badr the successor to the Imamate, with the intention of securing their financial investment in Hodeidah. The coup and the subsequent Egyptian intervention complicated Moscow's long-term strategy for the Red Sea region. Rather than serve as a facility solely for the Soviet navy, the Hodeidah port was backlogged with Egyptian shipping and military transport. The airport in Sana'a was also being used as a base for Egyptian aerial operations in Yemen. The

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[47] Y. Tomilin, "Indiyskiy Okean v agressivnykh planakh imperializma," MEiMO, 8, 1971, 27.

[48] Alexei Vassiliev, *Russian Policy in the Middle East: From Messianism to Pragmatism* (Reading: Ithica Press, 1993), 195. Vassiliev also attributes the importance of the Hodeidah port to the anti-British stance in Moscow.

[49] *Blizhnevostochnyĭ konflikt* vol. 2, 461. AVPRF, Fond 087, Opis 28, Papka 75, Dela 5, List 71-74, February 23, 1965. Marshal Amer appealed to Gorshkov for an increase in the Egyptian navy size in advance of their meeting in the UAR.

[50] Talal Nizaemeddin, *Russia and the Middle East: Towards a New Foreign Policy* (London: Hurst & Company, 1999), 24.

continued Egyptian presence secured Soviet access, albeit somewhat limited, to both Hodeidah and the Sana'a airport in the short-term, but the instability of Sallal's regime created a level of uncertainty in Moscow about the long-term strategy and access to Yemeni facilities. After succumbing to successive political and military crises, the Soviet foreign office began to explore other more reliable Soviet allies in the YAR administration to replace Sallal.

It was not long before Soviet officials began to question the continued support for the forty-eight year old Sallal. Sallal had taken part in the failed 1948 revolt and was part of the Yemeni Free Officer group since that time. He was considered a revolutionary hero by some Yemenis, a title that was reinforced by his continued rhetoric against British imperialism and the deposed Imam. In the months following the revolution, however, Sallal's popularity was subdued in response to the increasing amount of corruption among Yemeni officials, tense tribal relations, and the continued presence of Egyptian troops in Yemen. Russian historian Alexei Vassiliev observed that "[Sallal's] dependence on Egypt was absolute. He visited Cairo so frequently that he became a figure of fun. In some areas of Yemen Egyptian officers acted as virtual governors; Egyptian advisers often engaged in black marketeering, snatching away a portion of foreign trade from local merchants. Moreover, the Egyptians' condescending attitude even riled a good number of republicans."[51] Sallal's reliance on Nasser weakened vicariously weakened the Soviet position in Yemen as their approach to the YAR was contingent upon a middleman relationship with Egypt, an unpredictable regional ally.

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[51] Alexei Vassiliev, *King Faisal of Saudi Arabia: Personality, Faith and Times* (London: Saqi Books, 2012), 291.

In an official assessment of the economic and political situation in Yemen, the Soviets observed that Sallal relied mainly on his disorganized army and the aid of the UAR, with little or no domestic popular support. Rather than address those inequities, Sallal retained plans for a Yemeni army of 28,000 to create a presidential security state, as unlikely as it may have seemed. Furthermore, his government did not manage to exercise a single economic reform, yet repeatedly made statements restricting large estates, the construction industry, improvement of living standards for the population, and other ambitious projects. The Yemeni government's only salvation came from foreign financial and economic assistance, primarily from the USSR and UAR. The Soviets concluded that without help from the UAR, "it will be difficult for Sallal's government to strengthen its position and its republican regime in the country."[52] This bleak assessment continued even after 'Abd al-Hakim Amer's positive report on the progress of the Yemeni national economy and tribal control several months later.[53] Even Nasser himself, in a conversation with John Badeau admitted the futility of the YAR government: "You would not believe what goes on in Sana'a. Half of the Ministers never go to their offices and the other half don't know what to do when they get there."[54]

On March 31, 1964, Nikita Khrushchev and Vasiliy Kuznetsov, the First Deputy Foreign Minister, met with Sallal and YAR Foreign Minister Hassan Makki during a planned visit to Moscow. Khrushchev and Sallal exchanged letters of formality thanking each other for their respective invitations, travel, and hospitality and

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[52] RGANI, Fond 5, Opis 30, Dela 452, List 43, June 1964.

[53] *Blizhnevostochnyĭ konflikt: iz dokumentov arkhiva vneshneĭ politiki Rossiĭskoĭ Federat͡sii*, vol. 2 (Moscow: Mezhdunarodnyĭ fond "Demokratii͡a", 2003), 461. AVPRF, Fond 087, Opis 28, Papka 75, Dela 5, List 71-74, Erofeev memorandum following UAR Vice President Marshal Amer's visit to Yemen, February 23, 1965.

[54] Anthony Nutting, *Nasser* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1972), 350.

reiterating the friendly intentions of this meeting. Kuznetsov considered this visit as a positive sign of Soviet-Yemeni friendship, despite serious misgivings as to the sustainability of the Sallal regime.[55] The emergence of the "third-force" several months later forced Sallal to make further compromises to the opposition leaders and granted them a political council to form the "The Progressive Yemeni Republic". Sallal was only able to maintain his political position and control over the army by using coercive military force against his own population.[56] His precarious political situation left the USSR with little choice but to consider alternatives to Sallal's leadership, for fear that continued access to strategic assets in Yemen would be endangered.

In anticipation of the collapse of Sallal's regime, the Soviets made careful calculations into alternative Yemeni leaders. Soviet intelligence reports targeted five members of the YAR government, highlighting in particular their respective stances towards the USSR. The Soviets planned to install a puppet leader so that the YAR could be corralled into the Soviet sphere in the aftermath of an eventual Egyptian withdrawal. Until that point the "Soviet-five" could also be counted upon for continued Soviet intelligence and support within Sallal's regime itself.

Among the "Soviet-five" were two future leaders of the YAR, Abdel Rahman al-Iryani and Hassan Muhammad Makki. Al-Iryani, the YAR Minister of Justice and a prominent member of the "third-force", assumed control of the YAR presidency in 1967 following the ousting of Abdullah Sallal, while Sallal was visiting Moscow. Iryani, a judge prior to the coup, had spent fifteen years in prison after being implicated in the 1948 coup against Imam Yahya, and was an ardent opponent of the Egyptian occupation and interference in internal Yemeni affairs. In February 1964, he was

[55] RGANI, Fond 5, Opis 30, Dela 451, List 75 and 76, March 31, 1964.

[56] RGANI, Fond 5, Opis 30, Dela 452, List 14-19, June 1964. This intelligence report on Sallal was compiled by V. Kornev.

appointed a member of the Politburo in recognition of his positive attitude towards the Soviet Union.[57]

Hassan Muhammad Makki, the YAR Economic and later Foreign Minister, was in contact with Soviet embassy employees in Ta'iz both before and after the coup and had been instrumental in strengthening the Soviet-Yemeni relationship. He was estimated to have a warm opinion of the political relationship with the USSR and was initially the Soviet Foreign Ministry's top candidate to replace Sallal.[58] Makki was ultimately appointed YAR Prime Minister in 1974.

In addition to Makki and Iryani, Soviet officials continued to cultivate a relationship with the three other members of the "Soviet-five", who were all central figures in the Yemeni republic. Hussein al-Dafa'i, who served as YAR Minister of War, Minister of the Interior, and ambassador to the Soviet Union was one of Sallal's closest and greatest confidants in addition to being a pro-Egyptian Arab Nationalist. During his tenure as ambassador to the USSR from 1965-1966, Dafa'i developed a friendly relationship with the USSR and openly valued the Soviet military help for the YAR and the work of the Soviet military specialists in Yemen. He often spoke of developing a closer relationship and alliance with the Soviet Union.[59] Sallal was alarmed by Dafa'i's relationship with the Soviets and had him arrested under suspicions that Dafa'i was subverting Sallal's regime. Dafa'i would later be appointed Yemeni Minister of State in 1977.

Abdullah Dobbi, the former Minister of War and a YAR military commander, had earned a military degree in Baghdad along with Sallal and others of the Yemeni Free

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[57] RGANI, Fond 5, Opis 30, Dela 452, List 24, June 1964.

[58] RGANI, Fond 5, Opis 30, Dela 452, List 20, June 1964. Makki also spoke fluent English and Italian.

[59] RGANI, Fond 5, Opis 30, Dela 452, List 21, June 1964.

Officers group and was one of the most active and influential revolutionaries. Dobbi had a relatively long history with the Soviet Union dating back to Imam al-Badr's 1958 Moscow trip and served as national security director in Hodeidah during the period of the Soviet port construction. In February 1963 he was named the personal presidential consular to the Soviet Premier, cultivating a friendly relationship with Soviet officials throughout the civil war.[60] As Sallal's aid for the arrest of targeted political opponents, Dobbi developed his own personal network of security personnel stationed around the country.[61]

Saleh Ali al-Ashwal, the longtime YAR Ambassador to the USSR, was one of the first YAR officials to visit Moscow in November 1962, by invitation of the Soviet Minister of Defense. He personally handed Khrushchev a message from YAR President Sallal in recognition of the 45th anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution. During the time of their stay in the USSR together with the delegation, he was taken on tours of Kiev and Leningrad, developing a close relationship with Soviet officials. At the 1962 meeting and throughout his tenure as ambassador, he was reported to have divulged confidential and valuable information about the internal political situation in Yemen.[62]

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[60] RGANI, Fond 5, Opis 30, Dela 452, List 22-3, June 1964. The Soviet intelligence report attributed his early absence from the YAR government to initial hesitancy to join the revolution. He was also married with 4 children and speaks a little bit of English.

[61] Oleg Gerasimovich Gerasimov, *I͡emenskai͡a revoli͡ut͡sii͡a, 1962-1975 : Probl. i suzhdenii͡a* (Moskva : Nauka, 1979), 43. Among this group were Muhammad Hassan, chief of the presidential bureau, Galeb Ali Sha'ri, the director of the Peoples Court, Ahmad Jalil, head of security in Sana'a, and Abdullah Barakam who also worked in national security. All four served under Dobbi during his time as national security director in Hodeidah and were among the group that accompanied Sallal to Moscow. (RGANI, Fond 5, Opis 30, Dela 452, List 28, June 1964.)

[62] RGANI, Fond 5, Opis 30, Dela 452, List 25-6, June 1964. Ashval also headed the YAR delegation to the DPRK. When he died in January 2005, al-Ashwal was honored by Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh as one of the most well-respected revolutionary leaders.

Yemeni "Hearts and Minds"

While the Soviet Foreign Office was planning for a post-Sallal Yemen, they were also overseeing a shift to a direct diplomatic and aid relationship with the YAR, rather than relying on an Egyptian intermediary.[63] While the US was cutting aid to Egypt and improving the American relationship with Saudi Arabia through official visits and the presence of an air squadron for protection, the Soviets were cultivating a very different relationship with the Yemeni people. Rather than focus solely on military and strategic aid, the Soviets invested resources in education, infrastructure, and entertainment in an attempt to win the "hearts and minds" of local Yemenis.

In October 1964, for example, the first group of Soviet tourists arrived in Yemen and included teachers of the Middle East, journalists, artists, and religious Muslims. During their guided tour they became acquainted with the lives and the way of life in the country, along with Yemen's history and culture.[64] The next month, a Soviet group of artists gave their first concert in Sana'a. The concert was a great success with an audience of 2,000 that filled the hall to its entrance. The attendants included YAR Vice President Hassan al-'Amri and other important ministers.[65] This effort to win Yemeni "hearts and minds" was deemed a success, at least according to one barometer. The

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Visits to Moscow were not always pleasant politics, as the Yemeni ministers had a predilection for getting drunk while abroad. During one such occasion, the YAR deputy minister of foreign affairs had too much to drink and passed out on the couch of a Soviet official. Soviet agents took photos of the drunk Yemeni, surrounded by empty bottles and Yemeni military documents scattered haphazardly across the floor. The KGB later used these photos to bribe the Yemeni official, forcing him to divulge sensitive information on YAR and Arab League decisions (Sakharov, *High Treason*)/

[63] RGANI, Fond 5, Opis 30, Dela 452, List 28, June 1964.

[64] GARF, Fond 4459, Opis 24, Dela 3084, File 74, October 24, 1964, "Soviet Tourists in Yemen".

[65] GARF, Fond 4459, Opis 24, Dela 3084, File 114, November, 1964. Prior to the concert, the Yemeni Minister of Information addressed the audience and gave thanks to the USSR for the concert.

Yemenis observed that the Soviets called themselves *tovarishch*, or comrade. In turn, the Soviets working in Yemen noticed that the Yemenis began to call themselves “sadik”, a rough Arabic equivalent of comrade, or friend. This was taken as a sign of positive Soviet influence on the Yemeni public and the foundation of closer Soviet-Yemeni relations.[66]

The port city of Hodeidah, long envisioned as the base for Soviet operations in the Red Sea and the Middle East in general, continued to undergo major infrastructure and civil projects that went well beyond the confines of the port facilities. The majority of these efforts were focused on the area of the city known as “New Hodeidah”, a newly constructed urban area built over parts of the original city of Hodeidah destroyed by fire in 1961. Soviets specialists, sent to the YAR for two month rotations, included architects, quantity surveyor engineers, geological engineers, construction engineers, and doctors.[67] The main projects included hospitals, schools, roads, telephone lines, and an electrical grid were built within and between the cities of Sana’a, Hodeidah, and Ta’iz. These projects were seen as a rival to the American $500,000 investment into the reconstruction of the Ta’iz water supply system, which was called “The Kennedy American Water System”.[68]

The stated goal of the Soviet education program in Yemen was “that the Yemenis should leave the darkness of the Middle Ages and take the road towards progress and

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[66] GARF, Fond 4459, Opis 24, Dela 3084, File 75, October, 1964.

[67] GARF, Fond A2306, Opis 75, Dela 3997, File 2, 1964, Education Plan and Construction Plan for Hodeidah.

[68] GARF, Fond A2306, Opis 76, Dela 1764, File 32, 1967. The first diesel generators were installed in Sana’a by Italian (1961) and Yugoslav (1963) companies. The Soviet electrification proposal also included plans for an intricate sewer system in Sana’a and Hodeidah.

civilization."[69] Prior to the revolution in 1962, there were only nineteen elementary schools and a reported illiteracy rate of 98%. By October 1964, more than 900 elementary schools (Grades 1-6) and four secondary schools (Grades 7-9) were open for enrollment. The subjects taught included Arabic language and literature, religious education, history and society, math, drawing, painting, sciences (physics, biology, chemistry, and nature), labor education, and music. There were over thirty hours of school per week, starting in first grade during a school year extended from October 1 through the end of July. In Hodeidah specifically, the schools dedicated six hours a week to Russian language beginning in third grade in a plan of study approved by YAR Ministry of Education.[70] As a testament to the popularity of the Russian language classes, the program advisor placed an urgent request to the Soviet Ministry of Education for an airmail of an additional sixty copies of Arab-Russian textbooks for the upcoming school year as many more students had enrolled than initially expected.[71] In addition to investing in local education, 5,500 Yemeni students were given scholarships to study in the USSR in December 1965.[72]

The Soviet Foreign Office understood that increasing the military aid and debt ceiling for Nasser would encourage him to maintain a military presence in Yemen, thereby securing Soviet access to Yemeni port and air facilities and redirecting Egyptian foreign policy away from a high-stakes confrontation with Israel. Relying on

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[69] GARF, Fond A2306, Opis 75, Dela 3997, File 11, 1964 Education Plan and Construction Plan for Hodeidah.

[70] GARF, Fond A2306, Opis 75, Dela 3997, File 16, 1964, Education Plan and Construction Plan for Hodeidah. Most of the teachers in these schools were Soviet-trained Egyptians.

[71] GARF, Fond A2306, Opis 75, Dela 3997, File 7, 1964 Education Plan and Construction Plan for Hodeidah.

[72] Richard E. Bissell, "Soviet Use of Proxies in the Third World: The Case of Yemen," *Soviet Studies* vol. XXX (1978), 94.

Nasser's independently-minded machinations was not a sustainable long-term solution for the broader Soviet aim of securing a stable naval and airbase in South Arabia. In other words, both the USSR and Nasser hoped to take advantage of the collapse of British sea power in the region through plans that inherently opposed one another. Over the course of the civil war, the USSR invested economic, military, educational, and technical resources into the "Soviet-five" and domestic infrastructure as part of a Soviet effort to win the "hearts and minds" of the Yemeni people themselves, irrespective of state leaders and foreign interventionists.

The Soviets contributed politically and economically to the Egyptian mission in North Yemen, but preferred small-scale relations with the Yemeni people. The paradox is that the Egyptians received the brunt of Yemeni hostility as a reaction to their military occupation and forced model of a socialist state, while Moscow was spared from similar criticism, leaving Soviets in a position to benefit from the new Yemeni state once the Egyptians withdrew.[73] The irony of Soviet imperialism and simultaneous anti-colonialist rhetoric and the Sino-Soviet competition over dominance of the Third World did not go unnoticed.[74] It was not, however, until June 1967, when this irony developed into popular protests and riots in front of the Soviet consulate in Hodeidah.[75]

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[73] Vassiliev, *Russian Policy in the Middle East*, 196. Oleg Peresypkin made similar observations.

[74] Vladimir Sakharov and Umberto Tosi, *High Treason* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1980), 149-150.

[75] Sakharov, *High Treason*, 170-1. Sakharov blames the Chinese for precipitating popular unrest and protest.

No Wheat for You

Congressional disapproval of the US aid program to Egypt grew exponentially as Egyptian rearmament continued even during the UN observer mission. Alaskan Senator Ernest Gruening led the Senate opposition to Kennedy's third world military and economic aid policy which had already racked up a bill of upwards of $1.8 billion by the end of 1963. David Bell, Kennedy's former budget director and new administrator of US Agency for International Development (USAID) received the brunt of congressional disapproval, primarily from Democratic liberals such as Frank Church, who had defected from Kennedy's leadership in the party. Church noted that by 1963, all but eight noncommunist countries were receiving some form of US foreign aid, demonstrating that the US tried to "do too much for too many indiscriminately". Senator Halpern of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee claimed that the PL-480 shipments to Egypt were causing "Yemen mass murders subsidized by our economic assistance".[76] When the Senate passed the Gruening amendment in October 1963, one month before Kennedy's assassination it was clearly seen as a criticism of his policy with Nasser. The amendment terminated all forms of US aid to any nation "engaging in or preparing for aggressive military efforts" against the US or its allies.[77] This included Kennedy's economic aid to the UAR through the PL-480 wheat sales. Although the Gruening amendment was only the first step in a series of political maneuvers to increase Congressional control over foreign aid, it significantly hampered Kennedy's ability to repair his coveted relationship with Nasser.[78]

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[76] Quotes of Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Oct 13, 1965 (LBJ Library, NSF UAR Files, Box 159, Vol. 1, 176a)

[77] Johnson, Robert. "The Origins of Dissent". The Gruening amendment had both Nasser and Indonesian President Sukarno in mind.

[78] Warren Bass, *Support Any Friend: Kennedy's Middle East and the Making of the US-Israeli Alliance* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2003), 140.

A combination of Nasser's intransigence and US Congressional dissent forced Kennedy to reconsider his relationship with Nasser and Arab Nationalism and compelled Egypt to look eastward in order to secure economic and military aid from the Soviet Union.[79] In 1962, Kennedy had been under the assumption that Nasser was the predominant ideological force in the Middle East. By 1963, however two Ba'thist coups in Iraq and Syria presented a challenge to Nasser's monopoly of the Arab revolution and weakened Nasser's position in the eyes of the Kennedy administration.[80]

When Lyndon B. Johnson took office on November 22, 1963, he retained few of Kennedy's affinities for Nasser and did not hesitate to portray the Yemeni Civil War as it was: a cage for Nasser and Arab Nationalism. As he wrote to King Faisal less than a month after taking office:

> "On its present course, the UAR is gaining little, losing much in Yemen. UAR problems are many. Yemen's drain on UAR resources is great. UAR is not winning popular support among the people. Yemen can well prove to be a trap for those who would seek to dominate it."[81]

Two foreign policy crises in Egypt further soured Johnson's opinion of Nasser. On Thanksgiving Day in 1964, Congolese protestors in Cairo stormed the newly dedicated JFK Library in Cairo in protest of US policies in Congo, burning the building to the ground. Egyptian police who knew of the riots in advance did not inform the US Embassy. Weeks later, on December 18, 1964, oil man John Mecom's plane was shot down near Egyptian airspace. Although Egyptian officials claimed it was an accident,

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[79] Gerges, "The Kennedy Administration and the Egyptian-Saudi Conflict in Yemen".

[80] Barrett, *The Great Middle East and the Cold War*, 298. It was clear that Nasser was not involved in either Ba'thist coup.

[81] Department of State to US Embassy in Saudi Arabia (FRUS, Volume XVIII, Document 389). Contains LBJ letter to Faisal from December 19, 1963. LBJ Library, NSF Files of Robert Komer, Box 3, 57, RWK-LBJ, Dec 16, 1963. Interestingly, letter writing, as under Kennedy's administration, took an added level of significance. Komer suggested that Johnson send Faisal "a long, warmly worded letter reinstating [the] policy on this issue. As in most letters to Arabs, its very length is regarded as a mark of esteem."

Mecom was a friend of LBJ and one of his biggest financial supporters, further tarnishing Nasser's image in Johnson's eyes. US Ambassador to Egypt Lucius Battle warned Nasser that he would not receive aid from Johnson, "because first you burn his libraries, then you kill his friends."[82] The efforts of Bushrod Howard, an American lobbyist for the royalist cause continuously criticized the economic aid to Nasser, further pressuring the Johnson administration to reconsider any form of economic aid to Egypt.[83] Johnson was not amused by Nasser's lack of gratitude for US economic aid, which culminated with a particularly anti-American Port Sa'id speech in December 1964: "The American Ambassador says our behavior is not acceptable. Well, let us tell them that those who do not accept our behavior can go and drink from the sea. If the Mediterranean is not enough to slake their thirsts, [the Americans] can carry on with the Red Sea."[84] Nasser's appeal to the Egyptian people to throw US aid into the Red Sea was countered with further Congressional limitations on aid to Egypt.[85]

Robert Komer, the administration's Yemen civil war guru, feeling unrestrained by Kennedy's courting of Nasser, explained to McGeorge Bundy that Yemen had become a perpetual military disaster for the Egyptian army. As long as the US did not force Egyptian disengagement and continued to dangle PL-480 wheat sales to the "bellies of the fellahin", it was safe to assume that Nasser would not threaten US and UK bases in

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[82] Little, Douglas, "Nasser Delenda East: Lyndon Johnson, the Arabs, and the 1967 War," in *The Foreign Policies of Lyndon Johnson: Beyond Vietnam*, ed. H.W. Brands (College Station, Tex. : Texas A&M University Press, 1999), 152.

[83]Burns, William J. *Economic Aid and American Policy Towards Egypt, 1955-1981* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1985), 160.

[84] Gamal Abdel Nasser Speech in Port Sa'id on Victory Day celebration, December 23, 1867 (nasser.bibalex.org/speeches).

[85] Burns, *Economic Aid*, 144, By 1962, 99% of Egyptian wheat imports were coming from the US, amounting to 53% of Egyptian wheat requirements.

Aden and Libya and would not succumb to complete Soviet domination.[86] Komer explained to LBJ: "At this point it may serve our interests better if Nasser has to keep a third of his army tied up there, since this will enforce restraint vis-à-vis Israel."[87] The US was "just as happy to have 50,000 UAR troops in Yemen rather than deployed against Israel". All that remained to be done was to periodically reassure Faisal's security in order to protect the billion dollar oil investment and encourage Faisal to purchase US aircraft over the British and French options.[88] Parker Hart admitted to British counterparts the US mistake in recognizing the YAR but "compared Nasser's position in the Yemen to that of a fly stuck on fly paper for Nasser was caught in the Yemen and could not escape from it and would slowly die there like the fly on the flypaper."[89]

The realization in 1965 that Nasser might actually be pulling his troops out of Yemen led Johnson and others in the State Department to argue that it was in the US national interest to send economic aid to Egypt, if only to keep Nasser in Yemen. On June 22, 1965 Washington resumed wheat sales to Egypt and allowed non-governmental organizations and charities to gift an additional $11.6 million worth of agricultural equipment. Johnson was able to circumvent the limitations of the Gruening amendment by issuing a direct presidential order for the resumption of aid. On January

[86] RWK-Mac (FRUS, Vol. XXI, Doc. 331, April 24, 1964)

[87] LBJ Library, NSF Files of Robert Komer, Box 4, 365, RWK-LBJ. Mar 9, 1964.

[88] LBJ Library, NSF Saudi Arabia Files, Box 155, Volume 1, 175, RWK-LBJ. Apr 15, 1965. Komer made this statement only weeks after spending a month in Israel negotiating an agreement with Israeli Prime Minister Levi Eshkol, signed on March 10, 1965. In this agreement, the US reiterated its commitment to Israeli security and territorial integrity in return for an Israeli commitment not to manufacture nuclear weapons (Gluska, Ami, *The Israeli Military and the Origins of the 1967 War: Government, armed forces, and defence policy 1963-1967* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 30).

[89] IWM, Neil McLean Papers, Box 20, Brown Book (Diary of visit to Yemen – Jan-May 1965).

3, 1966 the US sold Egypt an additional $55.7 million of agricultural surplus in an effort to alleviate the economic strain of sustaining an army of significant size in Yemen.[90]

In Saudi King Faisal's June 15, 1964 letter to LBJ he expressed "supposed alarm and revulsions" at Soviet intentions and Nasser's violation of Saudi airspace.[91] Later that year, Faisal continued to drop buzz-words about global communism and expressed concern about "the dangers of anarchy and Communist activity in Yemen." He said that "today, virtually every facet of international communism, including the Russians, Chinese, Poles, and Czechs, are at work in Yemen."[92] Faisal's Soviet alarmism was nothing more than a game to gain the goodwill and support of Johnson. Johnson visibly appreciated Faisal's anti-communist rhetoric and continued to perceive Saudi Arabia as the cornerstone of American policy and oil interests in the Middle East. This perception was evident in the great deal of preparation and care invested in King Faisal's Washington visit in June 1966.[93]

Despite calling him a communist and urging Nasser's immediate departure from Yemen, Faisal secretly rejoiced at the sight of Nasser expending huge sums of money on a futile war. A combination of covert British operations, Saudi support for royalists, and the popularity of Zubayri's *Party of God* made it increasingly clear that by 1965

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[90] Guldescu, *The War and the Haradh Conference*, 326.

[91] FRUS, Vol. XXI, Doc. 344, August, 19, 1964, Embassy SA-DOS.

[92] FRUS, Vol. XXI, Doc. 356, December 11, 1964, Summary of UN meeting on Yemen.

Faisal continuously trumped up communist charges as the key word in dealing with US the same way current Yemeni President Sallah (2011) claims terrorism and Al Qaeda every time he is in a political crisis.

[93] LBJ Library, Social Files, Bess Abell, Box 15, King Faisal Dinner.

Nasser was simply trapped in Yemen and was unable to establish a republican regime loyal to the UAR.[94]

In a June 1966 meeting with Faisal, Secretary of State Dean Rusk clarified the relatively lax attitude towards Nasser's troop presence in Yemen. The return of over 40,000 troops to Egypt would threaten the stability of the entire region:

> "With more troops in Egypt, the possibility existed for the U.A.R. to move toward the east, which would result in a full scale war; to the west, where we had our important base in Libya; or to the south, which would create a large problem with the Sudan and would not be welcome by the Africans."[95]

According to CIA intelligence estimates in May 1966, Nasser was not prepared to suffer a humiliating withdrawal from Yemen and was forced to accept the realities of the intractable stalemate. His failed five year economic plan combined with the strain of financing a large army abroad led to a plethora of economic problems in Egypt. Domestic economic woes and self-inflicted foreign affairs blunders encouraged popular opposition to the cost and casualties of the war in Yemen.[96] In essence, there was no longer a need for an expedited Egyptian withdrawal from Yemen, as the continued occupation was destroying Nasser's regime from within.

In a speech to Palestinian (PLO) delegates in 1965, Nasser explained the logic of his inaction against Israel: "Is it conceivable that I should attack Israel while there are 50,000 Egyptian troops in Yemen?" After the 1956 Sinai War, the UN negotiated a ceasefire and positioned a peacekeeping force in Sinai. According to Michael Oren, the absence of a realistic military option against Israel while the Egyptian army was

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[94] FRUS, Vol. XXI, Doc. 360, February 18, 1965 CIA Summary ("Nasser's Problems and Prospects in Yemen).

[95] FRUS, Vol. XXI, Doc. 402, June 22, 1966, Conversation (Faisal-Rusk).

[96] LBJ Library, NSF National Intelligence Estimates, Box 6, Folder 36.1, National Intelligence Estimate: UAR. May 19, 1966.

bogged down in Yemen ameliorated Nasser's stance against the presence of UN peacekeeping troops on Egyptian territory.[97] Although only a temporary respite from Egyptian and Israeli hostilities, Nasser's commitment in Yemen carried with it an inherent inability to pursue military expeditions elsewhere. In fact, the Egyptian efforts in Yemen became "so futile and fierce that the imminent Vietnam War could have easily been dubbed America's Yemen", just as Yemen was "Nasser's Vietnam".[98]

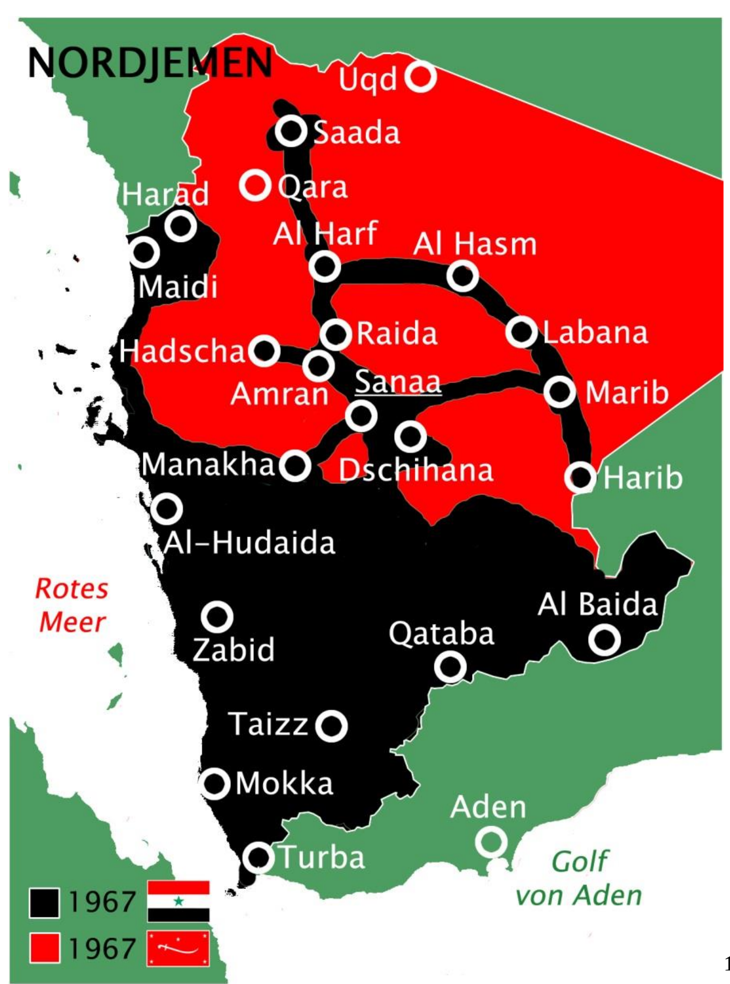
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[97] Michael Oren, *Six Days of War: June 1967 and the Making of the Modern Middle East* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2003), 40.

[98] Oren, *Six Days of War,* 15. In reality, the term Nasser's Vietnam was coined by David Holden, the Middle East correspondent for *The Gurdian* on December 1, 1965 (David Holden, *Farewell to Arabia* (New York: Walker and Company, 1966), 110).

Long-Breath Strategy and Chemical Warfare

The Egyptian "long-breath strategy", a defense of the "strategic-triangle" and road network, was sustained by an increased presence of the air force. Rather than march long columns of armored cars north and east of the Sana'a region, frequent aerial bombardments acted to hinder royalist troop and supply movement and demoralize the local Yemeni population. In addition to un-guided, precision, incendiary and delayed explosion bombs, the Egyptian air force began to employ poison gas bombs in large numbers from 1966-67. The use of chemical weapons was part of the Egyptian effort to depopulate the countryside through a "scorched-earth policy designed to eliminate support for the royalist guerillas.[99]



[100]Fig. 6.1

[99] McGregor, *A Military History of Modern Egypt*, 263.
[100] *Der Fischer Weltalmanach* (1966), 365.

The first reported poison gas bombing occurred in the Yemeni village of al-Kawma'ah July 6-8, 1963, with victims complaining of "choking feeling, burning in the stomach, spitting up black blood, partial blindness, black burns on the body, and skin fell off leaving scars. The milk of mothers and cows also dried up. Lingering severe cough for many others."[101]

The gas bombs in 1963 were deemed amateurish and test models made in a rudimentary Egyptian military facilities. The Egyptian chemical weapons program began shortly after the 1956 Suez War out of a sense of strategic inferiority and vulnerability. In 1962, the first such facility was established in Abu Za'abal, an area near Cairo. The plant, operated by the Egyptian Ministry of Defense concealed the presence of chemical weapons by manufacturing pesticides for commercial use alongside mustard and phosgene asphyxiants. Egyptian technicians were trained at the Red Army's Academy of Chemical Defense in Moscow and were supported by the continued presence of Soviet specialists. The chemical weapons inventory was procured from three main sources. In 1964, reports were issued by British intelligence indicating that the Soviets were shipping mustard gas-filled KHAB-200 R5 aerial bombs, phosgene-filled AOKh-25 aerial bombs. Other mustard-filled artillery shells were found abandoned by WWI British forces in Egypt's Western Desert. Lastly, when the laboratory began operation, the Egyptians were soon able to produce their own gas bombs by converting disposable aerial fuel tanks.[102]

From December 1966 through January 1967, the UAR bombed the northern Yemeni villages of Halbal and Kitaf with loads of fifteen gas bombs on each occasion. Although casualty figures were difficult to confirm, most accounts estimate that

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[101] IWM, Neil McLean Papers, Box 9, Jan-Jun 1963.

[102] Dany Shoham, "The Evolution of Chemical and Biological Weapons in Egypt," *Ariel Center for Policy Research*, Policy Paper 46, 1998, 2.

hundreds of civilians and royalist combatants were killed in each raid. According to Muhammad ‘abd al-Koddos al-Wazir, the royalist minister of state in 1967, 250 Kitaf villagers were killed by “asphyxiation”.[103] The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) conducted a full report of gas bomb attacks from 1966, indicating that Yemeni victims died 10 to 50 minutes after the initial attack with blood emerging from nose and mouth, but without any mark on their skin. The survivors continued to have difficulty breathing, developed chronic coughs, or went blind. Autopsy reports confirmed death by hemorrhagic pulmonary edema, likely caused by breathing poison gas as there was no evidence of external trauma to the victims. Following a gas attack in northern Yemen on May 10, 1967, ICRC Drs. Raymond Janin and Willy Brutschin described the victims symptoms as: “shortness of breath, coughing, pink foam at the mouth, general edema, especially the face; no physical injuries.” An analysis of the mucous in the victims’ respiratory track and lungs indicated that the possible gasses in these toxins included phosgene, mustard gas, lewisite, chloride or cyanogen bromide, or Clark I and II. British agents on the ground in Yemen added sarin gas to the ICRC list and accused the Soviets of supplying the Egyptian air force with chemical weapons in order to use Yemen as testing ground for their effectiveness.[104]

According to British intelligence report, the gas weapons were Soviet ZAB incendiary bombs modified by Egyptian scientists with chemical agents.[105] Other reports suggested that chemical weapons may have originated in China.[106]

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[103] Dan Hofstadter, *Egypt & Nasser Volume 2, 1957-1966* (New York: Facts on File, 1973), 206.

[104] IWM, Neil McLean Papers, Box 39, Blue Folder. The garlic odor indicated mustard gas. An additional independent British report indicated chloropicrin either alone or in a mixture with phosgene or diphosgene (The National Archives, WO188/2058, June 22, 1967).

[105] TNA, Ministry of Defence (RFA) Intelligence Report, DEFE 44/178, January 1967.

As the war progressed in 1967, the number of chemical attacks increased. In May 1967, a total of thirteen separate attacks were documented with a large number of casualties. For example, in a gas attack on the northern village of Wadi Hirran, 75 people were killed immediately with hundreds of others falling stricken with poison gas related symptoms.[107] As Ibrahim Ali Al-Wazir observed in a conversation with British officials, "what is going on in Yemen is by far worse and more horrible than what is going on in Vietnam."[108]

Saudi complaints to the UN regarding the use of chemical weapons in Yemen were ignored by U Thant who insisted that the Security Council deal with the matter. This was an unlikely scenario considering that neither the USSR nor the US was interested in pursuing a formal investigation. A formal US critique of the chemical bombing was made through the US Arms Control and Disarmament Agency rather than the State Department, further evidence of Washington's attempt to limit public criticism of Egyptian chemical warfare.[109] The absence of American criticism was also the topic of a letter from US Representative from New York Lester L. Wolff to Arthur J. Goldberg, the US representative to the UN.[110]

Historical accounts of the Yemeni civil war to date have maintained an element of uncertainty regarding the Egyptian use of chemical weapons.[111] Egyptian officials had

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[106] TNA, Arabian Department, FCO 8/710/48, February 13, 1967. Geraghty also suggests that the poison gas was manufactured in China (Tony Geraghty, *Who Dares Wins: The Special Air Service, 1950 to the Falklands* (London: Arms and Armour Press, 1980), 92).

[107] W. Andrew Terrill, "The Chemical Warfare Legacy of the Yemen War," *Comparative Strategy* 4 (1991), 114.

[108] IWM, Neil McLean Papers, Box 3, Green Folder, Dec 1967.

[109] Terrill, "The Chemical Warfare Legacy of the Yemen War," 114.

[110] Hofstadter, *Egypt & Nasser*, 209-210.

[111] For example Schmidt, *Yemen: The Unknown War*, 257.

insisted that the bombs were not poison gas but some form of incendiary bomb, such as napalm or phosphorous, and that the gas emanating from the bomb could be attributed to faulty ignition.[112] Even during the 1960s, there was fair certainty among American decision makers that Egypt was deploying chemical weapons in Yemen. For example, US Deputy Director for Plans, Richard Helms, confirmed with McGeorge Bundy on July 12, 1963 that the UAR had used in Yemen explosives containing a chemical warfare agent. According to additional CIA reports, the UAR had been using a toxic chemical bomb against the Yemeni royalist forces since as early as May 1963.[113] Between 1963 and 1967, the US Department of Defense had repeatedly confirmed with confidence the Egyptian use of chemical agents, including nerve gas, in Yemen. Undersecretary of Political Affairs Eugene Rostow added further alarm, indicating that the varieties of poison gas used by the Egyptians were "extremely lethal" and of "Soviet origin and manufacture". However, the US consciously muted international criticism of Nasser's chemical warfare in an effort to forestall a confrontation over the issue.[114]

In preparation for a confrontation with Egypt in Sinai, and the possibility of chemical warfare, the Israelis asked for a relatively small number of 20,000 US army M-17 gas masks. The US shipment, however, was made contingent on the secrecy of the transaction.[115] The conditions of this request were indicative of the broader American effort to avoid further military and diplomatic commitments to Yemen.

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[112] Terrill, "The Chemical Warfare Legacy of the Yemen War," 111.

[113] JFK Library, NSF, Countries Series, United Arab Republic, 6/63–8/63.

[114] NARA, RG 59, Middle East Crisis Files, E. 5190, Box 19, NE Situation, May–June 1967, Folder 1.

[115] FRUS, 1964-1968, vol. XIX, Arab-Israeli Crisis and War 1967, doc. 37, May 22, 1967, Memorandum From the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs (Hoopes) to Secretary of Defense McNamara.

Additionally, in 1966 and 1967, the US was increasing its own use of defoliants and bombing in Vietnam and any challenge of Egyptian aerial policy would have invited criticism of ongoing US bombing campaigns.

This continued American effort to keep Nasser caged up in Yemen by indirectly supporting the war effort and muting criticism of the use of chemical weapons continued until after the 1967 War with Israel. On July 23, 1967, US Ambassador to Saudi Arabia Hermann Eilts took a figurative sigh of relief following Secretary of State Dean Rusk's indication that there was no longer a need to maintain Nasser perpetual military stalemate in Yemen: "We might now be somewhat less emphatic and repetitive in recording our well-known reservations regarding increased Saudi support for Royalists," as the chances of the conflict crossing into Saudi Arabia or Israel were now miniscule.[116] Eilts was particularly relieved that he no longer had to obscure the facts of Egyptian gas attacks in Yemen and proceeded to discretely encourage royalist officials to publicize Nasser's brutal aerial chemical warfare.[117] In response, Nasser set up new office in Cairo to protect the Egyptian image after gas attacks.[118]

The same 20,000 gas masks originally allotted to the Israelis were subsequently sent to Yemeni royalists, as Nasser's gas bombing campaign continued even in the weeks after his June 1967 defeat. The US policy of secrecy turned into a forward policy of confrontation with Nasser: "Particularly because inhumane gas campaign continuing, we believe additional actions needed focus world attention on this problem…In our view some such positive action would make significant contribution toward generating

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[116] National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967-69, POL 27 YEMEN, June 27, 1967.

[117] FRUS, 1964-1968, Near East Region; Arabian Peninsula, doc. 454, July 23, 1967, Telegram from the Embassy in Saudi Arabia to the Department of State.

[118] TNA, FCO/95/85.

atmosphere in world public opinion which would render such outrages less likely in future."[119]

In 1968, the Mutawakkilite Kingdom of Yemen released a publication, complete with gruesome photos of gas bombing victims, condemning the Egyptian "mass-murders" and demanded international retribution. By this point, however, Egyptian forces had withdrawn and the international community had moved on to other conflicts, leaving the first use of chemical warfare in the Arab world to the backrooms of dusty and neglected archives.

Conclusion

The Haradh conferences, Saudi-Egyptian reconciliation, and Yemeni national dialogue created an atmosphere of optimism for an end to the conflict. Soviet military equipment and forgiven loans along with renewed American economic aid served to encourage Nasser's continued occupation in Yemen. The "long-breath strategy" that characterized the remaining months of the war was engineered by Nasser in order to maintain the UAR's "strategic triangle" and influence on the Arabian Peninsula by expending the least number of soldiers and economic capital. The Soviet foreign office began cultivating post-Sallal allies in an effort to secure access to the Hodeidah port, while the American State Department made a concerted effort to limit criticism of Nasser's use of chemical weapons. Lurking just outside Nasser's cage in Yemen, were the politically high-risk conflicts with the British in Aden and the Israelis across the Sinai border, a topic for the next chapter.

[119] FRUS, 1964-1968, Near East Region; Arabian Peninsula, doc. 453, July 22, 1967, Telegram from the Department of State to the European Office of the United Nations.

Chapter 7: The British and Israeli Clandestine War Against Egypt

Introduction

The Americans, Soviets, and Saudis were each secretly pleased to see Nasser rattling in his Yemeni cage with great restraints placed upon his plans elsewhere in the region. The British, on the other hand, were not merely content with shackling Nasser's foreign policy. When the first Egyptian troops arrived to Yemen in October 1962, British officials perceived a direct threat to Aden.[1] This was an opportunity to enact revenge on an Arab leader who had singlehandedly delivered the greatest blow to the British Empire in the Middle East. There was concern that Nasser would try to undermine British control over the Wheelus Air Base in Libya and a pair of bases in newly independent Cyprus. In order to protect these strategically important bases, the official British foreign policy objective was to "keep Nasser locked up in Yemen," without confronting him in open war.[2] The Anglo-Egyptian conflict would eventually encompass members of the French Foreign Legion, the Israeli air force, the American CIA, and the Iranian *savak* secret service, among others, turning the Yemeni conflict into an internationalized, yet clandestine, arena of anti-Nasser forces.

The Aden Group and the Secret War with Nasser

In 1869 British colonial officials in Aden formalized strategic relationships with the surrounding tribes, forming the East and West Aden Protectorate. Aden High Commissioner Kennedy Trevaskis turned the West Aden Protectorate of 15 tribes into the Federation of South Arabia (FSA) in April 1962 with Aden joining on January 18, 1963, intending it to serve as a permanent barrier from Arab nationalism even after the

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[1] Mawby, Spencer. *British Policy in Aden and the Protectorates 1955-67: Last outpost of a Middle East Empire*. London: Routledge, 2005. Mawby argues that colonial officials assumed that Aden was far enough on the fringes of the Middle East to make it safe from Arab nationalist subversion.

[2] TNA, Foreign Office Memo, DEFE 13/570/49, July 1964.

British withdrew.[3]The East Aden Protectorate consisting of those tribes that did not join the FSA, became the Protectorate of South Arabia. The British intent was to grant the FSA independence in 1968, while continuing to maintain defense facilities in Aden. To this end, the Aden Legislative Council formally approved Aden's accession to the Federation on September 24, 1962, only two days before the outbreak of the civil war.[4] The historian William R. Polk described this arrangement as a "shotgun wedding".[5] Prior to September 1962, it seemed as is if Aden and the Protectorates were sheltered from Pan-Arab nationalism by the "dense curtain of the Imam's Yemen. As the former High Commissioner of Aden, Charles Johnston explained: "The Yemeni revolution brought its bugles on to our doorstep."[6]

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[3] Bodleian Library. Papers of Kennedy Trevaskis. MSS.Brit Emp. S 367, 6/1. October 31, 1962. In 1839, Captain Haines wrote that the tribes surrounding the port of Aden were looking to the British to protect them from the rapid expansion of Muhammad Ali's empire

[4] John Harding, *Roads to Nowhere: A South Arabian Odyssey 1960-1965* (London: Arabian Publishing, 2009), 143. Following the war's outbreak, riots and protests broke out in Aden as the population presumably regretted the September 24th vote.

[5] William R. Polk, *The Arab World* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980), 210.

[6] Charles Hepburn Johnston, *The View from Steamer Point: Being an Account of Three Years in Aden* (London: Collins, 1964), 125.

Vitaly Naumkin argues that the this "shelter" from Pan-Arabism was one of the factors that allowed Marxism to take hold in South Yemen (Vitaly Naumkin, *Red Wolves of Yemen* (Cambridge, UK: The Oleander Press, 2004).



[7]Fig. 7.1

Upon leaving Aden in 1964, Trevaskis warned his replacement Richard Turnbull that defending Aden in the face of Nasser's presence in Arabia was becoming increasingly difficult. Echoing the conversation between Campbell and Palmerston in 1839, Trevaskis explained to the Prime Minister's Office that "the base in Aden is the major obstacle to Nasserite pretensions in the Arabian Peninsula and the Persian Gulf."[8]

British Defence Minister Peter Thorneycroft and Secretary of State for the Colonies Duncan Sandys agreed with Julian Amery that "the loss of Aden would signal the end of the British Empire."[9] In a secret decision, Prime Minister Macmillan appointed Amery as "minister for Yemen" and entrusted him with the responsibility of supporting royalist forces. Amery's "private war against Nasser" would receive no public

[7] www.AdenObserver.com., May 11, 2014.

[8] TNA. PREM 11/4928, October 14, 1963.

[9] Tom Bower, *The Perfect English Spy: Sir Dick White and the Secret War 1935-90* (London: Heinemann, 1995), 244.

recognition or official government approval as Macmillan's divided cabinet would never have sanctioned open support of the royalists and a confrontation with Nasser.[10]

Colonel Neil "Billy" McLean used the crisis of the Yemeni Civil War as an opportunity to confront Nasser's imperialism on the Arabian Peninsula, just as Captain Haines had orchestrated the political and military logistics to take possession of Aden during the 1830s. Following his visit to Yemen over Christmas break 1962-3, McLean explained the necessary measures that were needed against the Egyptian presence in Yemen:

> "The objective is to get the Egyptian troops out of the Yemen. If this were not possible then we should at least ensure that the Egyptians in the Yemen are so busy defending themselves against the Yemenis that they will not be able to intervene in Aden and other parts of the Arabian Peninsula. Therefore I believe the maximum possible support should be given to the Imam."[11]

Subsequent letters from British ambassadors abroad to the Foreign Office reiterated the need to "prevent UAR state from stabilizing in Yemen," and that British intervention should "maintain at least a stalemate if not a royalist victory."[12] For example, in a letter to Julian Amery, Michael Webb, a British undercover journalist fighting with the royalists, explained the shared sentiments felt by many current and former SAS agents: "That maniac in Cairo has a complex against Britain, and no amount of diplomacy and tact will ever eliminate it."[13]

Colonel David Smiley, Britain's military advisor on Yemen, surmised: "If supplies continue to be sent at this rate, though enough to keep the Royalists in the field, they are NOT enough to enable the Royalists to beat the Egyptians. For this reason I am

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[10] Bower, *The Perfect English Spy*,249.

[11] IWM, Neil McLean Files, Box 20.

[12] TNA, JK Watkins to FO, CO1055/3/61, January 23, 1963 for example.

[13] TNA, Michael Webb to Julian Amery, DEFE 13/570, August 20, 1963.

beginning to suspect that it may be the Saudi Arabian intention to 'keep the pot boiling' in the Yemen. Many countries opposed to Egypt would no doubt be happy to see 40,000 of Nasser's troops permanently tied down in the Yemen, suffering casualties and costing Nasser a great deal of money. Only the Royalists and the UK have a common interest in the complete expulsion of the Egyptian from Yemen."[14] Jim Johnson, a central figure of the Aden Group, echoed McLean's observations claiming that a stalemate that pinned down the Egyptian army "in a war of attrition suited the Saudis nicely." Johnson also maintained skepticism over royalist interests following a failed offensive in 1966. French mercenaries working with British counterparts organized a heavy barrage of artillery to cover a royalist advance on Sana'a only to see al-Badr's forces remain in place, noting the "royalists' lack of resolve that went beyond the front line."[15]

Trevaskis argued that royalists could not defeat UAR forces, but that the royalists would drive Nasser out of Yemen, just as guerillas had driven the British out of Cyprus and Palestine and the French out of Algeria.[16] It was Trevaskis' belief, Nasserite supporters would rise up as a fifth column against the British in Aden making the colony untenable.[17] As he explained to Colonial Secretary Sandys: "in my view, we should do all in our power to prevent the Yemen Arab Republic from acquiring

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[14] IWM, Neil McLean Files, Box 6, Green Folder, David Smiley's report on visit to Yemen 7/3 – 3/4/64.

[15] Tony Geraghty, *Black Ops: The Rise of Special Forces in the CIA, the SAS, and Mossad* (New York: Pegasus Books, 2010), 170.

[16] Bodleian Library. Papers of Kennedy Trevaskis. MSS.Brit Emp. S 367, 6/1. March 31, 1964. This statement was made in relation to sending support to royalists through Federation territory.

[17] Bodleian Library. Papers of Kennedy Trevaskis. MSS.Brit Emp. S 367, 6/1. October 14, 1963.

stability and if possible to rid the Yemen of the UAR and other hostile influences."[18] From 1963-64, several British cross-border attacks on YAR military positions and against rebels from Radfan were condemned by the UN and British press. One air raid on a Yemeni base at Ford Harib in March 1964 received particular attention as it was the first time TV news cameras had filmed British counterinsurgency operations in South Arabia.[19]

According to Clive Jones in his book detailing British mercenary operations in Yemen, the post-Suez "malaise" dissuaded London from undertaking large-scale efforts to oppose Egypt. Clandestine operations were undertaken as a way to confront Nasser without publicly declaring war on the YAR.[20] According to John Harding, British political officer in Aden during the 1960s, "it was this unofficial campaign, rather than anything mounted by HQ Middle East Command in Aden, that ultimately frustrated Nasser's Yemeni ambitions."[21] The secrecy of these operations was regarded as a useful means to avoid international condemnation of overt military action, particularly from Americans who did not want to be seen as supporting "an old-fashioned colonial campaign."[22] Tony Geraghty, author and journalist with a focus on British intelligence,

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[18] TNA, Kennedy Trevaskis to Secretary of State for the Colonies, Duncan Sandys, FO 371/174635 BM/1041/64, April 23, 1964.

[19] David French, *The British Way in Counter-Insurgency, 1945-1967* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 240.

The rebels in Radfan, noted for their skill in battle, earned the British nickname "Radfan red wolves" (Vitaly Naumkin, *Red Wolves of Yemen* (Cambridge, UK: The Oleander Press, 2004), 89.

[20] Jones, *Britain and the Yemen Civil War*. Jones notes that the intelligence from the Aden Group was ignored by the British government, particularly in 1965 when Nasser was weakest. This led to the premature withdrawal announcement by the Labor Government.

[21] Harding, *Roads to Nowhere*, 174.

[22] Spencer Mawby, "The Clandestine Defence of Empire: British Special Operations in Yemen, 1951-1964," *Intelligence and National Security* 17:3 (2002), 107.

goes even further in claiming that the secret war in Yemen also “helped prevent an Egyptian or Marxist takeover in Oman and other Gulf States.”[23] In the television series *The Mayfair Set* detailing the clandestine war in Yemen, the English filmmaker Adam Curtis best described the group as “the first example of the ‘privatization’ of British foreign policy as its worldwide role wound down in the mid-1960s.”[24]

On the other end of the political spectrum, British Consul in Ta’iz, Christopher Gandy, dismissed Julian Amery’s alarmism, claiming that the Aden Group’s lobbying for royalist support was “moved by nostalgia for lost causes.” Gandy suggested recognizing the YAR on December 28, 1962 in an attempt to placate Nasser and stop his attacks on the British position in Aden. These “Tory imperialists” as Gandy termed them “apparently believed that if only all the King’s horses and all the King’s men could push hard enough they could put Humpty Dumpty together again and restore the Imamate, provided only that they were not held back by that awkward squad of wets and pussy-footers in the Foreign Office.”[25]

Kennedy Trevaskis agreed theoretically with Gandy, claiming that the project to modernize North Yemen would take decades and consume the resources and attention of Nasser and Sallal. Perhaps this may have been an opportunity to show British support for the YAR and demonstrate a post-Suez reconciliation with Arab nationalism.[26] Trevaskis was, however, a realist at heart and realized that continued British sovereignty in Aden was untenable, especially given the increasing anti-

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[23] Tony Geraghty, *Who Dares Wins: The Special Air Service, 1950 to the Falklands* (London: Arms and Armour Press, 1980), 66. Geraghty observations are purely speculative.

[24] Robert McNamara, *Britain, Nasser and the Balance of Power in the Middle East 1952-1967: From the Egyptian Revolution to the Six Day War* (London: Frank Cass Publishers, 2003), 187.

[25] Cormac, *Confronting the Colonies*, 137.

[26] Kennedy Trevaskis, *Shades of Amber: A South Arabian Episode* (London: Hutchinson & Co, 1968), 183.

colonialism voice and sentiments among local Adenis. This became particularly apparent following a grenade attack on Trevaskis on December 10, 1963 in the Khormakhsar airport in Aden.[27]

Amery and his Conservative allies saw support for policies of withdraw from Aden or reconciliation with Sallal as another example of British "appeasement".[28] Not all Conservatives were in agreement, as the contentious Tory politician Enoch Powell argued for the complete British withdrawal from colonial positions "East of Suez" following India's independence in 1947.[29] Gandy would be expelled by Sallal on February 17, 1963 in response to the non-recognition of the YAR.[30]

In October 1963, Macmillan was forced to resign and was replaced by Alec Douglas-Home, the previous Foreign Secretary.[31] Douglas-Home maintained a tolerance of the clandestine support for the royalist as he believed that "the whole history in the Middle East in recent years shows that Nasser has had a series of setbacks in Syria. He has only gotten bogged down in Yemen. Let us leave him alone and let him stew in his own juice."[32]

James Fees, a CIA officer in Ta'iz in 1963 organized a network of Arab-born agents who managed to infiltrate the inner-offices of the republic and Egyptian administration

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[27] Trevaskis, *Shades of Amber*, 193 and 198.

[28] Stephen Dorril, *MI6: Inside the Covert World of Her Majesty's Secret Intelligence Service* (New York: The Free Press, 2000), 682.

[29] Robin Harris, *The Conservatives – A History* (London: Bantam, 2011), 464.

[30] Jones, *Britain and the Yemen Civil War*, 53.

[31] Bower, *The Perfect English Spy*, 253. Home was replaced by Richard "Rab" Butler. Butler, closely associated with the a defeatist (appeasement was the term used during the 1930s) attitude towards Hitler in 1940, seemed eager to pursue a similar policy towards Nasser by opposing any British policy that might anger the Egyptian leader.

[32] TNA, PREM 11/4679, 56, April 8, 1964.

obtaining detailed maps of military importance.[33] During a meeting in November 1963 with the director of MI6, Dick White, and Richard Helms, then serving as Deputy Director of CIA, explained that he could not sanction official support for the royalists as the White House officially recognized the YAR. NSA director Robert Komer was convinced that London was exaggerating the threat from Nasser to Aden, as Nasser's support for terrorism in South Yemen was only a "pinprick" and was of no serious concern.[34] Any help given to the British Secret Intelligence Service (SIS) in Yemen would have to be completely “off the record”.[35] The clandestine supply of American weapons for the royalists increased American popularity amongst al-Badr’s supporters because the tanks and military hardware used by Egyptians and republicans were all Russian-made. The Irish-born journalist Peter Sommerville-Large explained that “because the Americans did not openly help the republicans it was assumed among the royalists that they secretly supported the Imam, and had only recognized the new regime for devious diplomatic motives.”[36]

1966 Defence White Paper

With the looming general elections in England in October 1964, Duncan Sandys added a political dimension to the secret war against Nasser, which he thought might discredit Harold Wilson, the leader of the Labour opposition. Sandys argued that

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[33] FRUS, 1964-68, vol. 21, doc. 441, Fees exercised a cover as a humanitarian aid worker. Perhaps as an unintended consequences, local Yemenis stormed a US AID building in Ta’iz and arrested the resident diplomats.

[34] TNA, FO 371/174636/ BM 1041/17, May 11, 1964, Komer conversation with Eilts (UK - US Embassy.

[35] Bower, *The Perfect English Spy*, 252. At the time of the meeting, American companies were building roads connecting Sana’a to Ta’iz.

[36] Peter Sommerville-Large, *Tribes and Tribulations: A Journey in Republican Yemen* (London: Robert Hale, 1967), 123. American charge d'affaire to Yemen, James N. Cortada remarked when hearing Sommerville’s story of pro-American royalists: “we can take it…if the Royalists regard us as allies, it’s all to the good – you can’t have too many friends.” (Sommerville, *Tribes and Tribulations*, 161).

"Nasser is probably the most hated man in Britain. But at bottom his policy and the Labour Party's also towards the Middle East are very closely aligned. If we could identify Wilson with Nasser…we might greatly strengthen our hand."[37] These political machinations were cut short when in July 1964, *Al Ahram* published five letters written between British mercenaries and the central command in England, threatening to uncover the entire operation. The ensuing short-lived media frenzy in England and Egypt discredited Conservative party members who were seen as complicit with British clandestine activities in Yemen.[38] The Labour Party would win the elections of 1964 and 1966, giving Harold Wilson the premiership.

In 1966, Harold Wilson's Labour government published a Defense White Paper which detailed the withdrawal of British forces 'East of Suez', thereby canceling any earlier plans for the British to maintain a military presence in Aden and calling for a complete withdrawal in 1968.[39] Denis Healey, the Secretary of State for Defence was responsible both for the 1965 White Paper affirming British intentions to retain a bade in Aden and the 1966 *volte face* in British colonial policy, calling for a withdrawal from Aden.[40]

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[37] Churchill Archives Centre, Duncan Sandys Papers, 8/16, Julian Amery to Alec Douglas-Home with note on Aden/Yemen problems, 7 May 1964.

[38] Johnny Cooper, *One of the Originals: The Story of a Founder Member of the SAS* (London: Pan, 1991), 181. Tony Boyle had written three of those letters hinting to some activities in Yemen. One letter was a letter exchange between Lady Birdwood, the director of the Yemen Relief Committee in Great Britain and Johnny Cooper regarding the transfer of medical supplies to Yemen, thereby underscoring the Egyptian distrust of the ICRC in Yemen.

[39] Jeffrey R. Macris, *The Politics and Security of the Gulf: Anglo-American hegemony and the shaping of a region* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 137.

[40] John Harding, *Roads to Nowhere*, 281-82.

The 1966 decision to withdraw from Aden was based on a number of factors: In 1964 Sudan forbade British over flights, thereby limiting access to Africa from Aden.[41] The FSA was considered a failure as the local elite were increasingly unwilling to collaborate with colonial authorities. Egyptian intervention in South Arabia fueled anti-British sentiments and violence, influencing domestic public opinion in England against maintaining an empire in the Middle East.[42] Finally, the economic hardships and ensuing Sterling crisis in 1966 forced Wilson to reduce defense expenditures on overseas bases such as Aden.[43]

A report from the British Petroleum (BP) refinery in Aden, with a capacity of 150,000 barrels per day, offered an additional consideration for the Defence Paper of 1966. The investment in the Aden refinery had long since been paid off and therefore the port was expendable from BP's point of view. There was still a danger of Nasser's further plans in the Gulf and the threat to BP interests.[44] BP officials felt that it was unlikely that South Yemen had the technical capability to operate the BP Aden refinery, with or without Egyptian help,[45] and would "have little adverse effect on Western interests in the Gulf".[46] The contingency plan in the event that the Aden refinery was

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[41] *The Times*, September 29, 1965. Pieragostini quotes this article as well in an effort to justify the British 1966 decision to withdrawal from Aden.

[42] Jacob Abadi, "Britain's Abandonment of South Arabia – A Reassessment," *Journal of Third World Studies* vol. 12, no. 1, 1995, 152-180.

[43] Jones, *Britain and the Yemen Civil War*, 190.

[44] British Petroleum Archives, 28693, April 15, 1966, A H Dutton.

[45] British Petroleum Archives, 9910, Middle East General – Aden, June 28, 1966, D F Mitchell.

[46] British Petroleum Archives, 9910, Middle East General – Aden, June 16, 1966, A H Dutton. Soviet involvement, however, later called this conclusion into question.

closed included new facilities in the French-controlled Djibouti, considered a viable option, despite the initial capital costs of construction and lost revenue in the interim.[47]

Nasser's Clandestine Response

Nasser, however, did not sit idly as British mercenaries and American agents aided royalist forces against Egyptian troops. In November 1962, the Egyptians announced the formation of a National Liberation Army to free South Yemen. The group was headed by Qahtan al-Sha'bi who had fled to Cairo in 1958. During a meeting in Sana'a in June 1963, Sha'bi oversaw the formation of the National Liberation Front (NLF), an anti-British Arab nationalist militant organization, supported by Egyptian smuggled weapons across the FSA border.[48] The formation of this organization attracted tribesmen from all over Yemen who joined the Egyptian cause to fight against British imperialism.[49] Egyptian journalist and Nasser confidant Mohammed Heikal justified Egyptian support for the NLF as retaliation for British support for royalists.[50] Mutual border incursions by ground troops, air force, and allied tribes marked the extent of the direct Anglo-Egyptian confrontation in South Arabia. Beihan, a transit-point for British-royalist aid was a frequent target for Egyptian-YAR bombing raids.[51] The YAR

[47] British Petroleum Archives, 9910, Middle East General – Aden, August 16, 1965, A H Dutton.

[48] Jonathan Walker, *Aden Insurgency: The Savage War in South Arabia, 1962-1967* (Kent, UK: Spellmount, 2005), 72.

[49] Dresch, Paul, *A History of Modern Yemen* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 91.

[50] TNA. FO 371 174636. BM1041/130, May 12, 1964. Conversation between Canadian Ambassador Robert Ford and Heikal.

[51] Glen Blafour-Paul, *The End of Empire in the Middle East: Britain's relinquishment of power in her last three Arab dependencies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 81.

served as a training base for anti-British force in a similar way that Aden served as a base for the anti-Imam Free Yemeni movement prior to 1962.[52]

By 1965, the Egyptian campaign in North Yemen had reached a stalemate, as the military came to realize the futility of mountainous warfare and the difficulty of holding territorial position. During the course of the "long-breath" strategy, Nasser could maintain a defensive position in the "strategic triangle" while dedicating additional resources and attention to South Yemen.[53] In January 1966, Nasser continued to facilitate attacks on Aden and the FSA,[54] by attempting to unite anti-British factions under a single Cairo-controlled Front for the Liberation of Occupied South Yemen (FLOSY).[55] The original members of the NLF rejected this Egyptian-proposed union and the prospects of Egyptian control over their organization and domination over all of South Arabia.[56] From November 1966 through the end of 1967, NLF and FLOSY engaged in a heated campaign for control of the anti-imperialist movement.

Nasser's attempts at relieving the pressure on the military campaign in North Yemen were not limited to guerilla groups in South Yemen. In January 1967 for example, a group of Yemenis were arrested in Saudi Arabia and accused of harboring intentions to conduct terrorist activities. According to their testimony, Egyptian officials arranged for their training in Ta'iz and Sana'a before sending them into Saudi territory to

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[52] Jeffrey R. Macris, *The Politics and Security of the Gulf: Anglo-American hegemony and the shaping of a region* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 133-134.

[53] Trevaskis, *Shades of Amber*, 189-190.

[54] British Petroleum Archives. 28693, May 6, 1966, A H Dutton.

[55] Walker, *Aden Insurgency*, 176.

[56] Julian Paget, *Last Post: Aden 1963-1967* (London: Faber and Faber, 1969), 165.

sabotage royalist supply sites.[57] In a further attempt to gain the upper hand in the clandestine war in Yemen, Egyptian intelligence officers even offered Jim Johnson substantial bribes to fight for Egypt instead of Saudi Arabia.[58]

British complaints to the UN and other international organizations were dismissed, while accusations against British conduct in Aden were readily issued. For example, Amnesty International in a report issued in March 1967 reprimanded colonial officials for allegations of prisoner torture by the British. The British Foreign Office complained that Amnesty International was slanted toward nationalist powers, conducted biased investigations, insisted on interviewing criminal detainees that were not political prisoners, and in their eyes issued baseless allegations while Egyptians were committing far greater atrocities in North Yemen.[59] It seemed to British officials in Aden that Egyptian incursions from Yemen into the FSA were condoned by the international community, while British retaliation in Yemen was condemned.[60]

Saudi Arabia took similar opportunities to reconsider support for the Hamid al-Din royal family in favor of the "third-force" moderate republicans. After several instances where the Saudis needed to be cajoled into continuing their support of the British

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[57] TNA, Foreign Office, FCO 8/763, January 16, 1967.

[58] Hart-Davis, *The War that Never Was*, 344. Johnson found this particularly ironic as the Egyptian government was broke, while the Saudi royal family was continuously awash in cash from oil revenues.

In a meeting with Imam al-Badr's foreign minister Ahmad al-Shami, Johnson and McLean were able to trace the royalist money trail for the clandestine war back to Saudi Arabia. Johnson himself was a wealthy man, having worked previously for Lloyds insurance market. Johnson's "fashionable London home on Sloane Avenue" acted as a weapons storage for the team's secret headquarters. (Tony Geraghty, *Black Ops: The Rise of Special Forces in the CIA, the SAS, and Mossad* (New York: Pegasus Books, 2010), 166).

[59] TNA, UN Human Rights Commission, FCO 61/219/3, February 20, 1967.

[60] TNA, Baghdad to Foreign Office, FO 371/174627/ BM 1022/62, April 2, 1964.

mercenary operations, McLean felt it necessary to turn elsewhere for military aid.[61] Along with other members of the Aden group, McLean maintained an active intelligence and operations channel with Israel, the only country to have a greater vendetta against Nasser and Egypt.

Yemen, Israel, and the Road to 1967

Egyptian military officers have readily blamed the Yemen war for their ignominious defeat in the 1967 War with Israel. Egyptian Field Marshal al-Gamasy claimed that "nearly a third of our land forces, supported by our air force and navy, were engaged in an operation approximately 2,000 kilometers away from Egypt, with no prospects for either a political or a military settlement."[62] Others claimed that the Sinai forces comprised only 60% active forces with 40% reservists. The more experienced fighters were evidently stationed in Yemen.[63] Lieutenant General Kamel Mourtagi, the Commander in Chief of Egyptian Armed Forces in Yemen went as far as claiming that Egyptian soldiers grew used to fighting with air superiority against a guerilla force in Yemen and were not prepared to face an army with its own air force.[64] These self-serving accounts do not accurately portray the impact of the ongoing war in Yemen on Egyptian military performance during the Six-Day War.

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[61] Jones, *Britain and the Yemen Civil War*, 218-19.

[62] Muḥammad ʻAbd al-Ghanī Jamasī, *Mudhakkirāt al-Jamasī* (*The October war: memoirs of Field Marshal El-Jamasi of Egypt*) (Cairo, Egypt: American University in Cairo Press, 1993), 36.

Muhammad Heikal explains that the Egyptian military debacle in Yemen was the cause of Israeli collusion with oil states and companies intent on weakening the Egyptian position in Sinai (Mohamed Heikal, *Secret Channels: The Inside Story of Arab-Israeli Peace Negotiations* (London: Harper Collins Publishers, 1996), 124.

[63]Ali Abdel Rahman Rahmy, *The Egyptian Policy in the Arab World: Intervention in Yemen* (Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1983), 251. This assessment was given by Lieutenant

[64] Rahmy, *The Egyptian Policy in the Arab World*, 252. This opinion was quoted from an interview in *Ros al-Youssef*, Cairo, October 10, 1977, 19.

By 1967, however, Nasser's "long-breath" strategy had consolidated the Egyptian position, allowing for the withdrawal of the great majority of troops who once totaled upwards of 70,000. According to most estimates, there were between 20,000-30,000 Egyptian soldiers in Yemen, hardly the one-third described by Gamsay.[65] This number may in fact be even lower, as it likely did not account for the order to withdraw an additional three brigades from Yemen on May 20, 1967. These brigades were destined for Sharm al-Sheikh.[66] The increasing use of aircraft and chemical warfare compensated for the declining number of soldiers who were being redeployed to Sinai. Rather than an impediment to Egypt's military performance in 1967, the intervention in Yemen and the cycles of troops being deployed acted as a training ground for battle experience, much more than sitting idly in military barracks in Sinai. Even if Nasser had withdrawn all the troops form Yemen prior to June 5, 1967, it is unclear how they would have made a difference considering the near-total loss of air superiority. Indeed, contemporary accounts of the 1967 War blame the devastating loss on the lack of Egyptian military planning and the difficulties of inter-Arab coordination.[67]

The official Egyptian national narrative blames the defeat on 'Abd al-Hakim Amer's reckless behavior, conveniently as he was found dead only weeks after the end of the

[65] TNA, Foreign Office, FCO 8/840, June 1967. British intelligence records report an estimated 22,000 by the end of June 1967. Some estimates go as high as 30,000 (Huwaydī, Amīn, *Ḥarb 1967 : asrār wa khabāyā* (al-Qāhirah : al-Maktab al-Miṣrī al-Ḥadth, 2006), 51 or as low as 20,000 (al-Hadidi, *Shahid ala harb 67*, 155).

[66] Ian Black and Benny Morris, *Israel's Secret Wars: A History of Israel's Intelligence Services* (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1991), 217. This order was intercepted by Israeli intelligence. Some estimates go as high as 30,000 soldiers.

[67] Eugene Rogan and Tewfik Aclimandos, "The Yemen War and Egypt's Preparedness," in *The 1967 Arab-Israeli War: Origins and Consequences*, ed. Avi Shlaim and William Roger Louis (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 164.

war from an apparent suicide or overdose.[68] Amer was quoted giving assurances that his army was ready and more than capable of confronting Israel, perhaps giving Nasser a false sense of confidence.[69] Even as late as May 19, 1967, Amer told Moscow that despite the continued costs of a commitment to Yemen, Egypt was intent on demonstrating that support of the YAR would not "be an obstacle to providing strong support for Syria."[70] Egyptian generals who were defeated in the field were quick to concur with Amer's culpability, blaming the ill-prepared forces in Sinai on poor military and political planning.[71]

The US, UK, USSR, and Nasser himself may have surmised that with forces stationed in Yemen, Egypt could not attack Israel. This scenario did not, however, exclude Israel from attacking Egypt. Israeli authorities developed an understanding of Nasser's military capabilities and willingness to use chemical weapons on a civilian population through high-level contact with British mercenaries, airlifts to royalist forces, and intelligence operations in Yemen, all of which were overseen by officials high up in the Israeli chain of command. The reluctance of the US and UN to condemn Egyptian chemical warfare was further evidence that the international community

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[68] Ferris, *Nasser's Gamble*, 273. Ferris details the various accusation made about a telegram instructing the evacuation of UNEF and aggressive actions in Sinai.

[69] Anwar Sadat, *In Search of Identity: An Autobiography* (New York: Harper & Row, 1978), 172 and Tariq Habib, *Milaffat thawrat yuliyu: Shahadt 122 min san'ha wa mu'asiriyyha* (Cairo: al-Ahram, 1997), 320. Laura James provides additional sources on Amer's misleading statements: Laura M. James, *Nasser at War* (New York: Palgrave, Macmillan, 2006), 98-9.

[70] *Blizhnevostochnyĭ konflikt: iz dokumentov arkhiva vneshneĭ politiki Rossiĭskoĭ Federat͡sii*, vol. 2 (Moscow: Mezhdunarodnyĭ fond "Demokratii͡a", 2003), 558. AVPRF, Fond 087, Opis 30, Papka 89, Dela 6, List 140-145, Pozhidaev memorandum following meeting with Marshal Amer, May 19, 1967.

[71] For example: Chief of Land Forces, 'Abd al-Muhsin Kamil Murtagi (Murtagi, 'Abd al-Muhsin Kamil, *al-Fariq Murtagi yarwi al-haqa'iq* (Cairo: Dar al-Watan al-'Arabi, 1976) and Chief of Operations Lietenant General Anwar al-Qadi (Oren, Michael, *Six Days of War*, 58). Ferris cites these examples and several others in his discussion of the opinions of Egyptian military officers (Ferris, *Nasser's Gamble*, 285).

might not rise to the defense of Israeli in the instance of poison gas use. These factors combined to foster a sense of alarm among Israeli military authorizes, serving as an additional impetus for a preemptive attack against Egyptian forces.

In his seminal work on the 1967 War, Ami Gluska explains that a "dread of annihilation" was at the core of Israel's security policy and the decision to preemptively strike Egypt and Syria. The participation of German scientists in the Egyptian medium-range rocket and chemical weapons programs and the publicized deliveries of advanced Soviet weaponry symbolized an existential threat to Israel. In an address to the Israeli Knesset, Foreign Minister Golda Meir expressed alarm at the alliance between German scientists and the Egyptian military claiming that "the close connection between Cairo and Nazism existed already in Hitler's time, and it is no secret that today Cairo is a haven for the principal Nazis."[72] Israeli military authorities feared an Egyptian chemical attack, including the former Chief of Intelligence Brigadier-General Yehoshafat Harkavi, who estimated the potential for casualties with over 100,000 dead.[73]

This apocalyptic psychology was exacerbated by the "courtside seats" to the Yemen civil war given to Israeli decision makers from 1964-1967. With each passing month in Yemen, the UAR air force gained experience in bombing raids, aerial reconnaissance, and ground support. In 1966 and 1967 in particular, Yemen became a testing ground for chemical warfare against civilian populations. May 1967, the month before the outbreak of the Six-Day War, was one of the most intensive bombing and poison gas warfare campaigns of the entire conflict.

[72] "Activities of German Scientists in Egypt," March 20, 1963, Sitting 234 of the Fifth Knesset, in *Major Knesset Debates 1948-1981*, vol. 4, ed. Netanel Lorch (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 1993), 1347.

[73] Ami Gluska, *The Israeli Military and the Origins of the 1967 War: Government, armed forces, and defence policy 1963-1967* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 6.

Israeli Airlifts

When French Djibouti, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia withheld permission to host the air support for British mercenaries, Neil McLean, Jim Johnson, and British Royal Air Force veteran Tony Boyle sought the help of the Israeli intelligence services and air force. Neil McLean was first introduced to his Israeli counterparts in October 1962 by MI6's former Vice-Chief George Young, who responded to the Israeli intelligence agency (Mossad) request for an "Englishman" by finding them a "Scotsman" (McLean). Brigadier Dan Hiram, the Israeli defense attaché in London promised McLean weapons, money, instructors who could pass as native Arabs, and the support of the Israeli air force.[74]

Chief of the Mossad Meir Amit met personally with the British group multiple times in 1962 and early 1963. Amit broached the idea of airlifts to Yemen the head of the Israel Air Force (IAF) Intelligence branch, Ze'ev Liron, who was among a group of 120 Holocaust survivors serving combat roles in the IAF. Shimon Peres, the Deputy Defense Minister and Ezer Weizman, the commander of the IAF and one of the main architects of Israeli air strategy during the Six-Day War, personally granted Liron permission to travel to Yemen and report on the feasibility of airlifting aid to royalist positions.[75]

In approving this mission, Peres and Weizman explained to Liron that supporting the royalist forces in Yemen was equivalent to fighting Egyptian forces and diverting their attention from the Sinai border. Furthermore, Imam al-Badr promised de-facto

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[74] Dorril, *MI6: Inside the Covert World*, 680.

Tony Boyle had worked as the aide de camp to Aden Governor Charles Johnston and had the most intimate knowledge of Yemeni terrain amongst the group. (John Harding, *Roads to Nowhere: A South Arabian Odyssey 1960-1965* (London: Arabian Publishing, 2009), 174).

[75] Moshe Ronen, *Tehomot u-sheḥaḳim* (Tel Aviv: Yedioth Ahronoth, 2013), 180.

recognition of Israel upon a royalist victory in return for their aid during the civil war.[76] During a separate meeting with Yemeni Foreign Minister Ahmad al-Shami, Ya'akov Herzog, the director-general of the Israeli Prime Minister's office, pressured the royalists for direct contact with Prince Feisal in the faint hopes that the Saudis would commit to recognizing Israel as well.[77]

After completing an abbreviated course in espionage, Liron was given a false Polish passport complete with an elaborate cover story. He was posing as an anti-communist Polish pilot named Buzhinsky, who obtained refugee status in England after communists killed his father. Liron flew to Aden, via Addis Ababa, Ethiopia and was smuggled across the Yemen border along with several British agents. For the next month he traveled through royalist camps and along Egyptian military bases, using English to communicate with the select number of Mutawakkilite Princes who spoke the language.

Liron communicated back to the IAF, that several obstacles that would need to be overcome to successfully airlift weapons and supplies to royalist forces in the north Yemeni highlands. The first difficulty was passing near the Egyptian airfield of Hurghada, located along the Egyptian Red Sea coast just south of Sharm al-Sheikh. Any plane traveling from Israel into the Red Sea area would surely warrant the attention of the four stationed MiG-17 nighttime reconnaissance-equipped planes. The IAF would have to follow a flight pattern over Saudi territory to avoid Egyptian notice, but would still have a difficult time finding the drop sites in the dark and unremarkable

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[76] Aryeh Oz, *Shema' Yisrael* (Tel Aviv: Ofir Publishing, 2011), 130-131. It is not clear how seriously Israeli officials took this offer for recognition , although Herzog makes reference to this in his letter to Julian Amery.

[77] Michael Bar-Zohar, *Yaacov Herzog: A Biography* (London: Halban, 2005), 239. Herzog assumed that if Saudi Arabia recognized Israel, perhaps Jordan would as well. There was no recorded follow-up to this meeting.

mountainous landscape. Liron spent time training locals in the use of flare markers to communicate with the pilots flying overhead. Liron made it clear that British mercenaries would have to communicate directly with the flight crew to ensure the success of the drop. Royalist commanders brought up an additional issue of the anonymity of the supplies and munitions. Liron explained that Israel could not obtain foreign munitions but would ensure the removal of any identifying marks that could link these supplies with Israel. It was understood that leaked information about Israel's role in the Yemeni conflict could have grave repercussions for the royalist position.[78]

Immediately upon his return from Yemen, Liron met with Amit and Weizman, exchanging information on the Egyptian position in Yemen and confirming that the airlift was possible. With utmost secrecy, Liron approached Aryeh ‘Oz, a trusted fellow Holocaust survivor and seasoned IAF pilot, and asked him to coordinate and fly the airlifts to Yemen. Knowledge of this mission was limited to Liron, ‘Oz, senior IAF navigator Mashe Bartov, and Mordechai (Mottie) Hod, who would assume command of the IAF less than a year before the Six-Day War. The mission reported directly to Ezer Weizman, IDF Chief of Staff Yithak Rabin and Prime Minister Levi Eshkol,[79] a further testament to the sensitivity of the mission and the direct channel through which reports from Yemen were relayed to Israeli policymakers.

The airlifts began on March 31, 1964 and continued until May 4, 1966 during which the Israelis conducted 14 successful missions airlifting military and medical supplies to royalists in the battlefield.[80] The two sets of missions were codenamed “Rotev”

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[78] Ronen, *Tehomot u-sheḥaḳim*, 181-183.

[79] Ronen, *Tehomot u-sheḥaḳim*, 184-185. ‘Oz sat in the command center during one of the later airlifts and claimed that the tension was so high that Weizman chewed his pencil and Mottie Hod smoked incessantly until the plane had cleared Yemeni airspace (“Hamarkiv Hasodi Shel Harotev,” in *Israel Air Force Magazine*, 180, April 1, 2008).

[80] “The Secret Ingredient of the Sauce,” *Israeli Air Force Magazine*, April 4, 2008.

("gravy") and "Dorban" ("porcupine"). On two occasions Israeli airlifts reached royalist commander Abdullah ibn al-Hassan in an isolated and remote mountainous region saving him from certain defeat.[81]

Tony Boyle was responsible for accompanying each flight in order to coordinate with his British colleagues on the ground. Each Stratocruiser transport plane, an adapted version of the US Air Force bomber,[82] carried 12,500 pounds of supplies and was forced to fly without lights or unnecessary electronic navigational equipment to avoid detection. The packages needed to be pushed out of the plane in a hurry as soon as the aircraft turned its nose skywards, as the drop-sites were small and the packages all needed to fall in the same vicinity.[83] In order to compensate for the lack of lighting equipment, the flights were planned only for nights with a full moon and clear skies. Each member was dressed in civilian clothes without any Israeli identification, carried false passports and gold coins in the event of an emergency landing in Yemen.[84] After seeing the success of the first drop, Imam al-Badr asked for the next drop to be made on a specific mountaintop a few dozen square meters wide with steep slopes on each side - no easy delivery task. Al-Badr invited prominent sheikhs and other loyal tribal leaders to watch the spectacle on May 26, 1964. After the packages landed on the mountaintop successfully, the tribal leaders cheered and called out, according to British observers: "We are so strong that we will be able to conquer Aden in addition to Sana'a!"[85] While this was hardly an encouraging reaction for British mercenaries aiding the royalists, it

[81] IWM, Neil McLean Files, Box 9.

[82] Harding, *Roads to Nowhere*, 174-75.

[83] "Hamarkiv Hasodi Shel Harotev," in *Israel Air Force Magazine*, 180, April 1, 2008.

[84] Oz, *Shema' Yisra'el*, 130-144.

[85] "Hamarkiv Hasodi Shel Harotev."

was nevertheless a demonstration of the psychological impact of the airlifts, regardless of their origin.



Fig. 7.2 Israeli Stratocruiser dropping aid to Yemeni royalist camp.[86]

During one of the flights, nearby antiaircraft fire forced the plane to change course and fly north of Sana'a where the Egyptian airfield was clearly visible along with rows of unguarded MiGs. Upon landing Tony Boyle broached the possibility of loading barrel bombs onto an Israeli Stratocruiser and destroying the Sana'a airfield and many of the Egyptian planes. Weizman initially approved the plan and began preparations, but was later overruled by Prime Minister Eshkol who argued that a bombing raid would have turned Israel into one of the belligerents in the Yemeni conflict.[87] Furthermore, the Israel Defense Forces were intent on avoiding a crisis either in Yemen or with Syria that might have been used as a diplomatic cover for Egypt's withdrawal from Yemen.[88]

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[86] "Hamarkiv Hasodi Shel Harotev."

[87] Oz, *Shema' Yisra'el*, 145.

[88] *Israel's Clandestine Diplomacies*, ed. Clive Jones and Tore T. Petersen (London: Hurst & Company, 2013), 114.

In exchange for its airlifts, Israeli officials asked the British mercenaries for detailed reports on Egyptian military capabilities and troop movements. For example, following the first reported use of Egyptian poison gas on June 8, 1963 in the Yemeni village of al-Kawma, McLean delivered shell casings to his Israeli counterparts for analysis.[89] In a meeting with British counterparts, Golda Meir received reports on Egyptian military performance in Yemen. She expressed concern for the Egyptian missile stockpile and the significant battlefield experience being afforded to Nasser's rotating troops.[90] In a second meeting with British Prime Minister Alec Douglas-Home, Meir expressed additional concern over the Egyptian acquisition of medium-range rockets and the willingness of the USSR to replace the purported 80 million tons of military material lost.[91]

Israeli Head of Military Intelligence Aharon Yariv estimated that well-trained and combat-ready Egyptian troops and poison gas bombs could conceivably be transported to Sinai within forty-eight hours leaving the IDF limited warning if Egypt was to undertake an offensive. According to Yariv's May 1967 intelligence appraisal, the Egyptian air and ground forces were highly effective and had the potential to increase the UAR offensive capabilities in Sinai, especially after the arrival of updated Soviet aircraft, electronic, and navigation systems.[92] Member of Knesset Ya'akov Hazan

[89] Dorril, *MI6*, 689. Porton Down, the UK Government's military science park determined that the shells contained nothing more than tear gas while the Israeli laboratories found traces of mustard gas. David Smiley believed that the lab results were obscured because government officials wanted to avoid a confrontation over chemical use.

[90] TNA, PREM 11/4928, October 7, 1963.

[91] TNA, PREM 11/4928, October 7, 1963, Home conversation with Golda Meir.

[92] Gluska, *The Israeli Military*, 200.

described the situation in May 1967 as "a storm which had been brewing in Yemen until then and was now moving towards Israel".[93]

Intelligence Operations

MI6 director Dick White and future CIA director Richard Helms worked with Mossad director Meir Amit and members of the Aden Group on two additional intelligence operations in Yemen.[94] The three parties put together teams of Yemenite Jews living in Israel and Mossad Arab-specialists to gather intelligence and aid the royalist war effort.

From 1948 to1950 approximately 50,000 Jews were airlifted from Yemen to the newly founded state of Israel in an operation known as "Magic Carpet". This group of Jews resembled native Yemenis, spoke their dialect, and, for all intents and purposes, was indistinguishable from the local population. The CIA helped the Mossad train a group of Yemeni Jews in guerilla warfare and the use of modern weapons before facilitating their infiltration into Yemeni territory.[95] During a meeting with a group of foreign diplomats, ‘Abd al-Rahman al-Baydani accused Israel in November 1962 of sending upwards of 1,000 Yemeni Jews through Aden to Yemen, with the intention of undermining the republic. Baydani's accusation was not only grossly exaggerated, but was also made most-likely before the Israeli intelligence actually dispatched agents to Yemen.[96]

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[93] "Political and Security Situation," May 22, 1967, Sitting 176 of the Sixth Knesset, in *Major Knesset Debates 1948-1981,* vol. 4, ed. Netanel Lorch (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 1993), 1561.

[94] The CIA provided financial support for the Mossad which served as an important source of intelligence information on the Middle East. (Powers, Thomas, *The Man Who Kept the Secrets: Richard Helms and the CIA* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979), 322.

[95] Dorril, *MI6*, 695. The trainers disguised the Yemeni Jews' real nationality and presumably cut off the traditional side-curls that distinguished Jews from Muslims in Yemen.

[96] Yael Vered, *Hafikhah u-milḥamah be-Teman* (Tel Aviv: Am ‘oved, 1967), 96.

In a letter to Julian Amery in 1967, Ya'akov Herzog encouraged the continued use of Yemenite Jews who had migrated to Israel explaining that they "speak Yemeni Arabic and are often indistinguishable physically from Arab Yemenis and would make liaison, technical missions, etc. very difficult for enemy propaganda to penetrate."[97] In this same letter to Amery, Herzog suggested turning to the Jewish community that remained in Yemen as discrete liaisons to aid the royalist war effort. When civil war broke out, there were upwards of 3,000 Jews in Yemen. According to Bruce Conde, they were "all staunch loyalists, supporting the Imam, serving in his armies, or if in YAR area, imprisoned".[98] Herzog envisioned Yemenite Jews both local and those settled in Israel serving in the royalist ranks and forming Israel's "best prospects of beginning the long, slow task of building Arab-Israeli eventual friendship and cooperation." He claims that after a battle victory in Khawlan, Yemeni outposts were shouting the following remark: "We hope our brothers in Israel (i.e. Yemenite Jews living in Israel and serving in the IDF) will give you as good a beating in the North as we are giving you here in the South."[99] Although Herzog's plans seem somewhat ludicrous in hindsight, they underscore the extent of the contact between Israel and the Aden Group.

In addition to this group of Yemenite Jews, the Mossad dispatched to Yemen an Egyptian-born senior intelligence agent, Baruch Zaki Mizrahi, to ostensibly report on

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[97] Churchill Archives Centre, The Papers of Julian Amery, AMEJ 1/7/7.

[98] Bruce Conde, "The Jambiya, For Dress And Enemy Carving" in *Linn's Weekly Stamp News*, October 30, 1967, 27. Conde claimed that the new industry of silver scabbard work in the Yemen coastal region is vastly inferior to the Jewish craftsmanship. He noted that "should the Arab states eventually come to some sort of negotiated settlement with Israel…there would be a rich market for *jambiya* silverwork among Yemen's some five million tribesmen."

[99] Churchill Archives Centre, The Papers of Julian Amery, AMEJ 1/7/7.

the Egyptian army and on traffic in and out of the Red Sea.[100] He entered the country with a Moroccan passport under the name Ahmad al-Sabbagh and established an espionage ring of Yemenis.[101] Mizrahi remained in Yemen until his capture by Yemeni authorities in May 1972, masquerading as a Moroccan businessman and documenting Palestinian terrorists who were using Hodeidah as a base to launch attack against Israeli shipping.[102] In 1972, Israeli officials appealed to President Nixon to intercede on behalf of Mizrahi, who was still interned in Yemen, as part of a prisoner exchange between Israel and Egypt.[103] When the US refused to intervene, fearing damage to US-Yemeni relations, the Israelis turned to West Germany and Iran who appealed directly to Yemeni Interior Minister Sayf Ali Khawlani, for a delay in Mizrahi's execution and for an official prisoner transfer to Cairo.[104] Negotiations continued after the Yom Kipper War, in October 1973,[105] and Mizrahi was finally released in March 1974 in exchange for Egyptian prisoners of war held by Israel.[106]

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[100] Dan Raviv and Yossi Melman, *Every Spy a Prince: The Complete History of Israel's Intelligence Community* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1990), 149. Prior to being transferred to Yemen, Mizrahi was stationed in Syria where he had been serving as the principal of a foreign language school, before his cover was blown in February 1965 forcing him to flee the country.

[101] Nixon Library, NSC 5551, July 17, 1972, Cairo 02818. One of the Yemenis Mizrahi recruited was referred to as Saleh al-Sukkari.

[102] Black and Morris, *Israel's Secret Wars*, 269. According to Shmuel Segev, Mizrahi was arrested while the Egyptian authorities were still stationed in Yemen. (Shmuel Segev, *Boded BeDamesek* (Jerusalem: Keter, 1986), 14.

[103] Nixon Library, NSC 5551, July 17, 1972, Harold Saunders to Henry Kissinger, "US involvement in Israeli Spy Case in Yemen."

[104] Nixon Library, NSC 5551, July 17, 1972, Tel Aviv Embassy to Department of State.

[105] FRUS, Vol. XXV, Arab-Israeli Crisis and War 1973, Doc. 362, Backchannel Message From Secretary of State Kissinger to the Egyptian Presidential Adviser for National Security Affairs (Ismail), November 28, 1973.

[106] Efraim Halevy, *Man in the Shadows : Inside the Middle East Crisis with the Man Who Led the Mossad* (New York : St. Martin's Press, 2006), 198-200. Mizrahi's release was a contentious point in Israeli-Egyptian negotiations as he was a spy rather than a captured soldier. Zvi Zamir, the Director of the Mossad in 1974 threatened to resign if Prime Minister Golda Meir did not press the negotiations for Mizrahi's release.

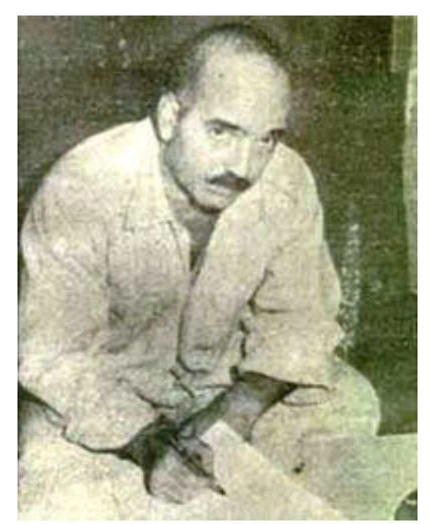


Fig. 7.3 Baruch Mizrahi in cell number 6 in Cairo (*Al Ahram* c. 1974)

In addition to Mizrahi, the Mossad sent veteran agent David Karon to meet with royalists in Yemen.[107] Little information is available on the actual intelligence delivered by the operations led by Yemenite Jews, Karon, or Mizrahi. The very existence of these operations in conjunction with the IAF airlifts are evidence of the attention Israel devoted to the Egyptian military activity in Yemen. Reports on Israeli activities and on Egyptian military and chemical abilities made their way directly to the desks of the most influential political authorities in Israel, factoring into the decision to preemptively strike Egypt in June 1967. Military officials, such as Yithak Rabin and Motti Hod, received direct reports from operations in Yemen and pressured Prime Minister Eshkol to launch an attack against Egypt.[108] On June 5, 1967, Israel became the only country to turn the clandestine war against Nasser into an open conflict.

Conclusion

In May 1967, Neil McLean claims to have sent a vital piece of intelligence to his Israeli counterparts through unspecified channels, reiterating that there is "no feasible way that Nasser could fight a war with Israel" with so many of his forces holed up in

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[107]Bar-Zohar, *Yaacov Herzog*, 241. According to Meir Amit's interview with the author.

[108] Mordechai Bar-On, "The Generals' 'Revolt': Civil-Military Relations in Israel on the Eve of the Six Day War," in *Middle Eastern Studies* 48:1, 2012, 33-50.

Yemen for the foreseeable months.[109] By this point, the British had moved up their date of departure to November 1967, leaving the Israelis only a few more months to exploit Nasser's apparent strategic disadvantage. Although this coincidental narrative is compelling, there is no written confirmation that the memo was received by anyone, let alone the Israelis. Furthermore, it is doubtful that the Israelis based their decisions in 1967 on a few lines of intelligence from a nostalgic British MP-turned Yemeni emissary. Israeli military officials already possessed sufficient intelligence on the Egyptian position in Yemen to make this strategic decision on their own accord. The most revealing aspect of this memo, however, is not the impact that it had on events in Sinai, if any, but in the psyche of British imperialists, even as late at 1967. There was a sense, at least among the members of the Aden Group, that it was still within the power of the British Empire to influence regional events in the Middle East.

As it happened, events in Sinai in May and June of 1967 turned out much as McLean had predicted. The cost of the Yemeni war economically and politically had taken a toll on Egypt's domestic prosperity and on Nasser's Arab Nationalist prestige abroad. The decision to reoccupy the Sinai Peninsula on May 14, 1967 and provoke the Israelis into a war was likely made at the behest of Nasser's strategic vision. As Jesse Ferris explains, war with Israel would both restore Nasser's stature in the Arab world and provide him with a justifiable military withdrawal from Yemen.[110] Events, however, did not proceed as Nasser had envisioned. Egypt was forced to withdraw from Yemen, but in the ignobility of defeat rather than the triumphant march to war

[109] IWM, Neil McLean Files, Box 3, May 1967. According to McLean, Nasser's blockade of the Gulf of Aqaba in May 1967 was part of the Russian orchestrated plan of turning the Red Sea into an Egyptian "Mare Nostrum" after the British withdrawal from Aden. The parallels between the legitimate fears that Muhammad Ali and Nasser's efforts to dominate the Red Sea are further testament to the similarities between the two eras.

[110] Ferris, Jesse, *Nasser's Gamble: How Intervention in Yemen Caused the Six-Day War and the Decline of Egyptian Power* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013), 268.

against Israel. The decisive Israeli victory in the Six-Day War brought Nasser's imperial expeditions in Yemen to a premature close. By December 1967, only weeks after the British evacuated Aden, Nasser withdrew the last Egyptian soldier from Yemen marking the end of 140 years of British and Egyptian competition on the Arabian Peninsula. The war in Yemen, however, was far from over. McLean and other British mercenaries would remain in Yemen during the ensuing royalist siege of Sana'a, harboring unrealistic hopes, that the Imam would be victorious, leaving British interests with at least one ally in South Arabia.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

The Siege of Sana'a

On August 29, 1967 at the Arab Summit meeting in Khartoum, Sudan, Nasser and Faysal agreed on a "Yemen Peace Plan". Egypt committed to withdraw its troops and in return Saudi Arabia pledged that it would discontinue aid to the Yemeni royalists. In return, the oil monarchies agreed to compensate Nasser for Egypt's economic loss as a result of the closure of the Suez Canal.[1] A military intervention that had originally been envisioned by Egyptian Field Marshal 'Abd al-Hakim 'Amer to take no more than a few weeks, had become a costly five year war against an underestimated royalist opposition.[2] Efforts at international diplomacy had come full circle. The original withdrawal agreements first proposed by US diplomat Ellsworth Bunker in 1963 continued to serve as the basis for peace negotiation throughout the conflict and were finally implemented in December 1967.

On November 5, 1967, Abdullah Sallal boarded a plane bound for Moscow, ostensibly to attend the 50th Anniversary celebrations of the Russian Revolution. Sallal's plane never made it to Moscow as he was diverted to Baghdad where he would spend the next 14 years in exile.[3] According to his unpublished memoirs, this exile was self-imposed as he understood what was awaiting him following Egypt's withdrawal.[4] Sallal had long fallen

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[1] Yevgeny Primakov, *Russia and the Arabs: Behind the Scenes in the Middle East from the Cold War to the Present* (New York: Perseus Books Group, 2009), 100. Despite the title, no plans were put into place for an oversight of Yemeni reconciliation.

[2] Ali Abdel Rahman Rahmy, *The Egyptian Policy in the Arab World: Intervention in Yemen 1962-1967 Case Study* (Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1983), 195.

[3] Ferris, Jesse, *Nasser's Gamble: How Intervention in Yemen Caused the Six-Day War and the Decline of Egyptian Power* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), 293.

[4] Rahmy, *The Egyptian Policy in the Arab World*, 238-9.

out of favor with fellow Yemeni republicans and would have been deposed earlier were it not for continued Egyptian intervention and support. In Sallal's absence, Qadi ‘Abd al-Rahman al-Iryani, a prominent member of the "third-force" and one of the "Soviet-Five" launched a coup taking over the YAR. Iryani was joined by fellow members of the "third-force", Ahmad Nu'man and Muhammad ‘Ali Uthman, to form a triumvirate ruling coalition. Hassan al-‘Amri was named Prime Minister and Hassan Makki was named Foreign Minister giving Soviet-friendly Yemenis influential positions in the new republic.

Egyptian aerial and artillery superiority for five years of the conflict had prevented a full-scale royalist advance on the capital city. Nasser's withdrawal which would be completed by November 29, 1967 was already in its advanced stages, leaving republican defensive positions and the entire "strategic-triangle" vulnerable to attack. With the republican defenses weakened, Imam al-Badr's counterattack on Sana'a, long-expected after the September 1962 coup, finally materialized in December 1967.[5] The siege lasted for seventy days and became a defining moment in Yemeni national history. After the Egyptian and British withdrawals from Yemen, the Saudi-royalist threat was met with the collective efforts of multiple segments of Yemeni society. NLF and FLOSY fighters arrived in Sana'a to protect the revolution and the war against al-Badr's forces became a popular revolt as previously anti-Egyptian republican tribes joined on the side of the republic.[6] Both Iryani and Makki left the city for purportedly unrelated reasons leaving Hassan al-‘Amri, who had only recently been released from political detention in Cairo, in

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[5] Schmidt, Dana Adams, *Yemen: The Unknown War* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1968), 295. Over the course of five years, the royalist radio station had announced an attack on Sana'a so often that listeners hardly took these claims seriously anymore.

[6] Dresch, Paul, *A History of Modern Yemen* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 114.

command.[7] ‘Amri’s heroic performance at maintaining the city’s morale and civil order during the siege and eventually breaking through royalist lines earned him the historic name of “The General of Yemen”.[8]

With the onset of the siege in December 1967, Iryani turned directly to Moscow with an urgent request for aid. In protest against what the Arab world deemed as the American collusion in the 1967 War, the YAR recalled its ambassador and curtailed diplomatic relations with the US. Since there were no longer diplomatic relations between the two countries, the US foreign office was at liberty to pursue a more open and noncommittal stance towards both sides in the continuing civil conflict. US Ambassador to Saudi Arabia Hermann Eilts explained the current status of US-YAR relations:

> “I assume that with YAR withdrawal of recognition from USG our political commitments in Yemen have been wiped clean. We ought now try to establish contact with as wide spectrum of Yemeni political contacts as possible. We should seek develop at least some influence with all groupings, but at this time commit ourselves to none. By doing so, hopefully, we may at some future time be able to exert constructive influence for a broadly based Yemeni Government.”[9]

In the absence of US intervention, the Soviets responded to Iryani with emergency airlifts of medical supplies, food, and ammunition for the besieged city.[10] A total of 10,000 tons of supplies were delivered to Sana’a along with a Soviet squadron of MiG-19s, pilots

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[7] Andrew McGregor, *A Military History of Modern Egypt: From the Ottoman Conquest to the Ramadan War* (Westport, CT: Praeger Security International, 2006), 264.

[8] Burrowes, Robert D., *Historical Dictionary of Yemen* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2010), 29-30. Although ‘Amri may have been mentally unstable, he managed to repel the “Sana’a Mutiny” of left-wing factions, ensuring that the emerging republic would remain conservative. After murdering a journalist in 1971, Iryani exiled ‘Amri to Egypt when he died in 1989.

[9] FRUS 1964-1968, Vol. XXI, Near East Region, File 454, Telegram from the Embassy in Saudi Arabia to the Department of State, July 23, 1967.

[10] Primakov, *Russia and the Arabs*, 99.

and ground crew intended to provide air cover for republican positions.[11] The royalists claimed to have shot down a "red-haired MiG-17 fighter pilot" who was wearing a Russian wristwatch and held Soviet documentation.[12] Bruce Condé explained how the royalists felt towards the Soviet intervention: "The Yemen war was simply a communist geopolitical move with Nasser as the agent." Sheikh Abdullah al-Ahmar of the Hashid tribal alliance threatened royalists with Soviet-orchestrated poison-gas bombings if they continued the siege of Sana'a.[13] Hassan al-'Amri made similar public threats on Radio Sana'a claiming that "he will summon Soviet warplanes to destroy with poison gas, napalm, rockets, and bombs 'every living thing' in the Royalist two-thirds of Yemen." In response, Condé commissioned new royalists stamps called "freedom fighter" that portrayed tribesmen with small arms fighting against Soviets, rather than Egyptians to reflect the shifting enemies.[14]

On March 21, 1968, the YAR declared that it had signed a new Soviet-Yemeni Friendship Treaty acting to solidify their alliance and continued cooperation. To emphasize the sincerity of their commitment, and in response to renewed hostilities in August 1968, Moscow organized 75-100 roundtrip flights to Yemen carrying munitions and supplies to the last battlefields of the Yemen civil war.[15]

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[11] Peter Mangold, *Superpower Intervention in the Middle East* (London: Croom Helm, 1978).

[12] Schmidt, *Yemen: The Unknown War*, 296.

[13] Bruce Condé, "Final Roundup Nets Total Of 25 Varieties In Free Yemen's 'Poison Gas' Semipostal Set" in *Linn's Weekly Stamp News*, January 8, 1968, 40. Sheikh Abdullah placed landmines in the castle of his royalist cousin Sheikh Nasr bin Nasr al-Ahmar.

[14] Bruce Condé, "Yemen Stamp Roundup Sorts Recent 'Crop'; Only Postally Available Material Recognized" in *Linn's Weekly Stamp News*, February 26, 1968, 46.

[15] Rahmy, *The Egyptian Policy in the Arab World*, 239-40.

In March 1969, Prince Muhammad ibn al-Husayn resigned as the Imam's deputy and royalist general. At that point Imam al-Badr realized that continuing the royalist military efforts would only result in more Yemeni bloodshed. According to his own recollections, al-Badr agreed to sever the allegiance between the royalist tribesmen and the Hamid al-Din family, allowing political flexibility to negotiate with Iryani and the YAR. Official negotiations took place during the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers, held in Jeddah from March 23-26, 1969. Both sides agreed to form a unified government with republican and royalist representation, albeit excluding the Hamid al-Din family. Several weeks later, Saudi Arabia recognized the YAR, officially ending that era of international intervention in Yemen.[16] The YAR Minister of Economics Muhammad Sa'id al-Attar argued that the northern opposition was driven by the presence of a foreign power in Yemen that might infringe upon their tribal independence in the highlands. Once the Egyptians and Soviets had withdrawn from Yemen, the temporary alliance with al-Badr was no longer a necessary measure.[17]

While the royalist and republicans were fighting their final battles in the north, the British-created Federation of South Arabia was quickly collapsing. On November 30, 1967, the day after the British withdrew from Yemen, the NLF declared an independent state of the People's Republic of South Yemen (PRSY). The NLF was able to take advantage of the power vacuum created by the simultaneous withdrawal of Britain and

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[16] Saeed M. Badeeb, *The Saudi-Egyptian Conflict over North Yemen, 1962-1970* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1986), 86-87.

[17] Muhhammad Said al-Attar, Le Sous-Développement Economique et Social du Yemen (Algiers: Tier Monde, 1964). Al-Attar argues that the presence of a foreign power in Yemen served as a uniting force for the tribes of North Yemen.

Egypt.[18] The NLF sent a delegation to Moscow and obtained political recognition from the Kremlin. By early 1968 a group of Soviet military advisers arrived in Aden. Political tensions continued in South Yemen as a radical Marxist branch of the NLF gained power and reorganized their party as the Yemeni Socialist Party. On December 1, 1970, South Yemen became the first and only Arab communist state, the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY).

As the PDRY became a center for Soviet military affairs in the region with a large naval and air presence, Moscow subsequently allowed their strategic relationship with Sana'a to deteriorate.[19] The USSR decided to abandon Sana'a for a number of reasons. Multiple coup attempts by left-wing Yemeni groups against YAR General Hassan al-'Amri failed, pushing the republic further to the conservative right and into an alliance with Saudi Arabia and Western powers. This political stance was demonstrated by the YAR decision in July 1969 to resume diplomatic relations with West Germany in exchange for an aid package worth 1.5 million pounds. Saudi Arabia continued to improve its relations with the YAR, offering their recognition in July 1970[20] along with a renewable aid package worth $20 million. Individual "stipends" or bribes were given to Yemeni tribal sheikhs to maintain their allegiance.[21] Saudi Arabia came to view the YAR as a buffer between the Marxist PDRY and the Saudi border. Furthermore, despite the precarious royalist position and the relative strength of the republican army equipped with Soviet weaponry, the last

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[18] Fred Halliday, *Revolution and Foreign Policy: The Case of South Yemen, 1967-1987* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 17.

[19] Stephen M. Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990), 1967.

[20] Stephen Page, *The USSR and Arabia* (London: The Central Asian Research Centre, 1971), 99.

[21] Dresch, *A History of Modern Yemen*, 124. Stipends were also given to leaders exiled from South Yemen after the British withdrawal.

battle of the civil war was hardly a measure of success. Depleted royalist forces captured the city of Sa'dah from republican forces in February 1970, placing them in a relative position of strength in advance of the conference for national reconciliation.[22]

Legacy of the Yemen civil war

The Yemen civil war was a pivotal moment in the history of the Middle East. The decline of Arab nationalism and Nasser's expansionist foreign policy was brought about by the Egyptian intervention in Yemen.[23] It would be incorrect to assume that Nasser's presence in Yemen was a complete failure. For one, the Yemeni republic remained intact despite eight years of war with the royalists. As part of the Saudi-Egyptian Khartoum agreement, Egypt was given a share of Saudi oil wealth and employment opportunity for hundreds of thousands of Egyptian workers in the Saudi oil industry during the 1970s and 1980s. Finally, Nasser succeeded in securing the Red Sea approach to the Suez Canal by uprooting the threatening British military presence in Aden. Egyptian presence in North Yemen and its support for the NLF and later FLOSY were instrumental in forcing an early British withdrawal from Aden and a collapse of the FSA.[24] Rather than a harbinger of defeat, the war in Yemen gave Nasser an opportunity to further his personal security, economic, and ideological agenda in the region in a relatively low-stakes conflict 2,000 miles away from Egypt.

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[22] Bruce D. Porter, *The USSR in Third World Conflicts: Soviet arms and diplomacy in local wars, 1945-1980* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 85.

[23] Ferris, *Nasser's Gamble*. Ferris argues in his book that the Yemen civil war played a role in Nasser's downfall and the Egyptian defeat in 1967.

[24] TNA, Prendergast (Director of Intelligence) to T. Oates Deputy High Commissioner of Aden, FCO 8/169/78, May 6, 1967. As a reaction to an increased number of FLOSY assassinations in 1967, NLF officials were "increasingly of the opinion that the Egyptians are assisting in keeping interactional tensions alive so as to render impossible any stable government in South Arabia."

The real victors in the Yemeni civil war were Saudi Arabia and the USSR. Without expending their own troops, the Saudis managed to secure a stable ally south of the border. The emergent YAR in 1970 represented perhaps the most ideal state the Saudis could have envisioned. The Shi'i monarch in Yemen had been exiled, the state was weak and decentralized and dependent upon continued Saudi funds. The most populous region on the Arabian Peninsula was split between North and South, allowing Saudi Arabia to maintain its regional hegemony and patronage of the YAR.[25]

The USSR similarly saw its vision of an ideal South Arabian state emerge in the PDRY. As early as June 1968, 18 Soviet ships visited Aden, a number that would increase exponentially over the subsequent years.[26] The Marxist country in South Arabia became a Soviet naval and military base for the interim of the Cold War and served as a strategic base for missions to post-colonial Africa; Angola, Ethiopia, Mozambique, and Somalia in particular. The increased naval presence in the Indian Ocean region occurred as the British withdrew from "East of Suez" in the late 1960s and early 1970s and ushered in renewed era of Soviet interest in its "internationalist duty" in the Third World.[27]

The Iraqi political scientist Adeed Dawisha best explains the aftermath of the Yemen civil war: "Inevitably, the conservative instincts and social customs of the Yemenis, as well as their religious affiliations, meant that sooner rather than later Sana would replace

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[25] F. Gregory Gause, *Saudi-Yemeni Relations: Domestic Structures and Foreign Influence* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 73.

[26] Patman, Robert G., *The Soviet Union in the Horn of Africa*: *The Diplomacy of intervention and disengagement* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 82. One third of those ships that visited were considered combatants.

[27] Patman, *The Soviet Union*, 71. This Soviet ideology was based on Lenin's concept of "Proletarian Internationalism" and the solidarity of the international working class.

Moscow protection by that of Riyadh." By the 1970s, it had become obvious that the survival of the YAR depended "not so much on the Russian tank as on the Saudi riyal."[28]

As international interest began to wane in 1968, Pavel Demchenko, the senior Middle East correspondent for *Pravda*, observed that September 1962 was not a revolution, but rather "a centuries-old method of Yemeni regime change."[29] When al-Badr's palace was first shelled on September 26, 1962, the conflict could still be considered a localized civil war. Any significant delay in Egyptian intervention may have signified the failure of the republic and the return of the Yemeni Imamate, albeit perhaps somewhat reformed. In 1962, the republican model was not a universally accepted concept among local Yemenis. Neil McLean recounted a demonstrative and comical story circulated among the Yemenis during his travels:

> "It is told that that when the great meeting of chiefs was called on the Foundation of the Republic they were informed that 'The Republic will bring you roads, schools, and other benefits which will make the Yemen into a modern country." The chiefs shouted 'Hooray, Long live the Republic," but at the end of the meeting they asked "This is all very fine, but who is going to be the Imam?"[30]

The local "regime change" was overrun by events and conflicts well beyond its border. The civil war was prolonged and the sufferings of Yemenis deepened as a result largely of players and forces much larger than themselves. With each additional international intervention, it was easy to lose sight of the fact that this conflict, at its core, was a clash

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[28] Adeed Dawisha, "The Soviet Union in the Arab World: The Limits to Superpower Influence," in *The Soviet Union in the Middle East: Policies and Perspectives*, ed. Adeed Dawisha and Karen Dawisha (London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1982), 16.

[29] P. Demchenko, 'Khozyaeva yemenshikh got' *Aziya I Afrika segodnya*, 1968.

[30] Imperial War Museum (IWM), McLean Files, Box 6, October 1964.

between Yemen's history and its future. The state that emerged in 1970 was starkly different from the isolationist regime of Imams Yahya and Ahmad. The previous generation of autocratic monarchs made every effort to forestall Yemen's entry into the international community. Instead, the civil war brought the international community to Yemen's doorstep and transformed the former kingdom into a modern nation-state. Rather than demonize the individuals who brought destruction, death, and a prolonged international conflict to Yemen, the country continues to celebrate even Abdullah Sallal and ʻAbd al-Rahman al-Baydani as national heroes.[31] Yemen's state-issued history and memory focuses on the 1960s as a period of revolution, nationalism and modernization rather than a trying decade of civil strife and political uncertainty. Even the most culpable collaborators and inept leaders have been granted the status of a national revolutionary hero.

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[31] Burrowes, *Historical Dictionary of Yemen*, 333-4. Sallal was invited back to Yemen in 1981, where he became an elder statesman until his death in 1994. He was celebrated as a war hero. The second anniversary of Baydani's death in January 2013 was similarly sponsored by the Yemeni embassy and hosted in the Cairo Opera House ("Anniversary of Yemeni Politician's Death to be Marked in Cairo," in *The Cairo Post*, January 3, 2014.

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